



PS3
PlayStation.3

PSP
PlayStation Portable

PlayStation.2



PlayStation.
Network

PlayStation® Official Magazine - Australia

MARCH ISSUE 2010
100% Australian Content

HUGE HANDS-ON!

FINAL FANTASY XIII

IS THE WORLD'S HOTTEST RPG
BETTER THAN YOU IMAGINED?

7 VIDEOGAME INJURIES (THAT WILL KILL YOU)

RATED!

ALIENS VS. PREDATOR

The game they didn't
want you to play!

VERDICT!

DANTE'S INFERNO

The God of War slayer
on a highway to Hell!



THE
TOP 50
GREATEST
PLAYSTATION
CHARACTERS
EVER!



FIRST PLAY!

RED DEAD REDEMPTION

Why this new lawdog
leaves GTA for dust!

ISSUE 41 MARCH 2010
AUS \$14.95 NZ \$16.95 inc GST

REVIEWED!

BIOSHOCK 2

Does 2K's undersea
epic sink or swim?



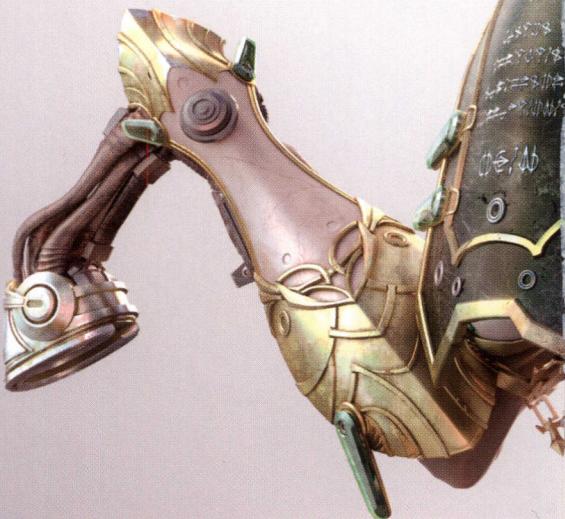
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TRUE CRIME FIRST LOOK DARKSIDERS TIPS NEW PRINCE OF PERSIA REVEALED

SQUARE ENIX®

FINAL FANTASY XIII



DO YOU HAVE THE COURAGE TO FACE YOUR DESTINY?



Available 09.03.2010



Mature themes
and violence

www.finalfantasy13game.com

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 PS3™
PlayStation 3

 XBOX 360.

XBOX
LIVE



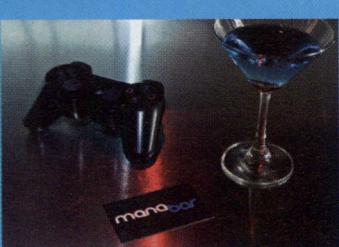
IN FRONT



THE SABOTEUR

Tips for all the toughest Perks, plus how to blow up a cow. See page 80 for all that and more!

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It should be a game!



7 THINGS...

...that will kill you deader than a doornail. Trust us. See page 42 if you don't!

PlayStation®
Official Magazine - Australia

REVIEWS



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Turns out returning to Rapture is as pleasurable as we expected!



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Why this new romp to Hell and back is pure poetry!



70 HEAVY RAIN

It's a Choose Your Own Adventure story for the PS3, and we're totally hooked!



72 ALIENS VS PREDATOR

The most violent dose of sci-fi you're likely to get for some time?



74 AOT: THE 40TH DAY

The sequel nobody expected starring the two burliest life-partners since Tango & Cash.



75 DARK VOID

Will this Bermuda Triangle adventure vanish without a trace?



76 GH: VAN HALEN

Might as well jump? We'll see about that. The latest Guitar Hero title thrashed.



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Hit the piste and go for gold. Sport: the only place lycra is acceptable.



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INSIGHT

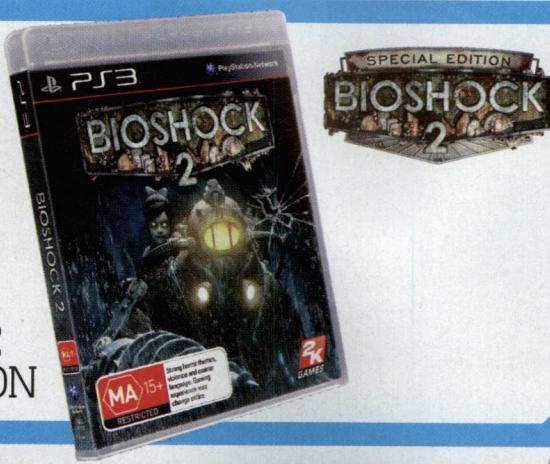
44 Darksiders



26 WIN!



5x BIOSHOCK 2
SPECIAL EDITION



The world's
biggest RPG
turned inside-out!
**FINAL FANTASY
XIII**

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MARCH 2010

WWW.GODOFWAR.COM



Strong violence,
sexual references
and nudity

BORN

BETRAYED

REVENGE

REVENGE

REVENGE

REVENGE

REVENGE

REVENGE



PS3

PlayStation 3

SONY
make.believe



Gaming's latest and greatest

PS3: IT'S ALSO A CASH REGISTER

Selling it bits off



Recent sales figures from GfK Retail and Technology Australia has shown that 318,000 PS3s were sold in 2009. The mighty console had a 27 per cent increase of sales growth over the previous calendar year, well ahead of its nearest competitor. Almost 30 per cent of all PS3's sold have been the new streamlined 'slim' model since it launched on September 3 last year.

"These results clearly show a positive response from Australian consumers to the new PS3 model," said Michael Ephraim, Managing Director SCE Australia and New

Zealand. "Available at a more affordable price [this has resulted] in a massive uptake as the ultimate game and interactive entertainment system for the home."

That's a lot of consoles sold. If you also count software (excluding PlayStation Store) and peripherals, PlayStation generated \$394 million of revenue. Incredibly, more PS2s were sold in 2009, bringing the final total of PlayStation 2 consoles in Australia to 2.5 million. That's one PS2 per nine people in this country alone.

PlayTV also performed well, shifting 36,000 units between

its launch on November 26 to the year's end. The unit supports your PlayStation's functionality as a media hub - PS3 is Australia's most popular Blu-ray player, as more than 75 per cent of households use a PS3 as their BD player.

2010 will bring 3D games through system software updates, as well as an on-demand movie delivery service through PSN.

Australia also has 604,000 PSPs on the loose, including the newly released Go.

It all means good things for owners. More consoles equals more games.



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How's your AI? We break it down for you and show you it's probably crap.



18 AROUND THE WORLD IN PS3
The events that shaped the games.



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Riding a rare high after all the kudos he received from readers on Facebook.

DRINKS: DUAL-SHOCKED, NOT STIRRED

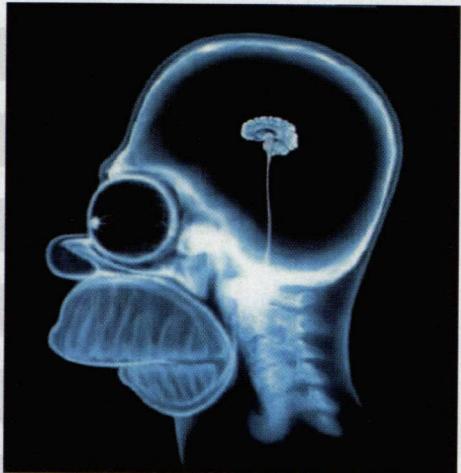
Love to game? Feeling thirsty? Try Mana Bar, the first bar in Australia, if not the world, where you can play the latest videogames and order a stunning alcoholic beverage (or soft drink if you're designated driver, or just don't feel like boozing).

Located in Fortitude Valley, Brisbane, and quite possibly open by the time you're reading this, Mana Bar promises "a stylish geek chic interior design" with playable console systems. The brainchild of four Brisbane lads, Guy 'Yug' Blomberg, Pras Moorthy, Shay Leighton and the internet's Ben 'Yahtzee' Croshaw, Mana Bar is free to enter, though you'd better be quick as it seats 50 and the games are free to play as well.

We're hopeful that they tether those controllers to the console, and have some ingenious cocktail names. We can only imagine good nights fuelled by a round of Drake's Fortunes, followed by a Dante's Inferno. Just watch out for the John Woo Stranglehold. It's even more potent than a Liberty City Iced Tea, or a fireworks-behind-your-eyeballs Bayonetta. Traditionalists will love the Assassin's Mead, or the house Red Faction.



WE CAN MAKE YOU SMARTER



Set your expression to 'smug': videogames can make you smarter. According to Dr Ray Perez, a program officer at the US Office of Naval Research, videogames can help adults increase their 'fluid intelligence', meaning they can process information more quickly than non-gamers and also boost their problem-solving abilities.

"We have discovered by looking at various kinds of experience, particularly video games, that video game players perform 10 to 20 per cent higher than... non-game players, in terms of perceptual ability and cognitive ability," said Dr. Perez. "They can acquire objects faster; they can process visual information much faster than normal individuals."

Although one of the games cited that makes gamers into super-beings is *Rise of Nations*, a PC game, we'll happily recommend that you play more *Uncharted*, *Modern Warfare 2* and *Red Alert* to improve your fluid intelligence. As we've previously reported, games can also improve elements of your eyesight as well as your hand-eye coordination. That is. Awesome.

IN SHORT...



Unfortunately, a large group of players have been blocked off *Uncharted 2*'s multi-player mode due to an "error syncing player data" message. Naughty Dog say they're "working on it, and sorry..."



In an interesting interview, DICE's Patrick Bach has said that he believes "a lot of people on executive level" at EA see beating *Modern Warfare* (with *Medal of Honor*) as a goal.



Lara Croft has cemented her status as videogaming's leading lady by notching up an impressive six world record entries in the brand new edition of Guinness World Records 2010 Gamer's Edition.

WHAT'S HOT OR NOT

Too hot to handle? Or too cold to hold?



Goregasm
Sega gets AVP out as God intended it; bloody as.



Boomstick
The fully powered-up shottie in *BioShock 2*



Bubbles!
Dante's and Heavy Rain turn out to be chock full of boob.



No Motion
God of War III confirmed to not use motion controls. Adam is happy.



Cheaters
One more day, one more MW2 exploit appears.



Atkinson
Mr. Atkinson calls all gamers criminals and dirty tricksters.



Crunch Time
The alleged Rockstar San Diego working conditions.



FACEPALM



The Watcher is watching, so watch it.

Today 6:03am • Comment • Like



Vulgrim Ah yes, I've heard you liked to watch. Pervert.

9 hours ago • Report



Samael LMFAO. Schooled. How do you like that, Charred Council lapdog?

9 hours ago • Report



The Watcher How ironic it is that a demon soul collector like Vulgrim - who takes pleasure in collecting 'the young ones' - calls moi a pervert. Why don't you just go back to being a shitty flea market for War? Just remember; no matter how much profit you make, you'll never be able to afford some dignity.

8 hours ago • Report



Samael lolololololooooo. Touchy!

8 hours ago • Report



The Watcher As for you Samael, working for the Council is the sweetest gig in the galaxy. Much like human Council workers I do sweet bugger all while your tax dollars keep me happily scratching my incorporeal arse. Also, what's it like living chained in a hole anyway? Get out much?

7 hours ago • Report



Samael If I had a heart, you'd have just broken it, Watcher. Speaking of which, who's up for getting me three takeaway hearts? I'm bloody starving.

7 hours ago • Report



Vulgrim I've got a shipment of half-chewed human pancreases coming in next week.

6 hours ago • Report



War I will secure you these hearts, Samael. In return you will tell me who The Destroyer is, what his mysterious goal is, and where he may be hiding.

4 hours ago • Report



The Watcher Gee, War. I wonder if he'll be the guy out destroying everything. I have a psychic hunch that his ultimate goal is to destroy. Maybe if we just follow the path of destruction we'll stumble upon his secret hideout.

2 hours ago • Report

SCREENTEST: Your favourite games as movies

STREET FIGHTER IV

Because moviegoers didn't learn the first time...

The Director

Uwe Boll's mentally-challenged cat

The Plot...

...will make no sense at all, will do no justice to any of the characters in the videogame, and shall focus on Guile (minus his bitchin' hairdo). Ryu and Ken will be hustlers, Sagat will be an arms dealer for some reason, and Dhalsim will be a doctor that turns Blanka into a Z-movie monster.

The Pitch

It's like the 1994 *Street Fighter: The Movie* but 'more good-er', and pitched to younger audiences that weren't quite alive enough to be traumatised by the original.

Green Light or Development Hell?

Utter green light. As long as your preview trailer alludes to a Chun-Li shower scene like the one in *Street Fighter: The Animated Movie*, you'll rake in millions of dollars from horny, horny fools. This license is flypaper for idiots - hell, the original made *three times* its production costs, and it was a soggy shit sandwich.

Best Scene:

A.N. Official: Colonel, have you lost your mind?

Colonel William F. Guile: No!

You've lost your balls!



The Cast:

Van Damme as the quintessential Guile that isn't anything like Guile, both in nature and appearance.



Lady Gaga as Cammy. Why?

Because she has zero martial arts training - it makes perfect sense...



Ben Kingsley as Bison. Like Raul Julia, Bison must be played by a decent actor suckered into this tripe.

Owen Wilson as Ken Masters. Note to self: bulk buy more steroids.

Mike Tyson as Balrog. Iron Mike is always down for a hilarious cameo.



"No! You've lost your balls!"

GUIDE



NUMBER CRUNCHING

9.1m

The number of copies of *Modern Warfare 2* has shipped so far. Sucker just prints money.



SEPARATED AT BIRTH

NO. 13 Karl Urban - grizzled gunslinger John Marston

Who is Karl Urban? He is best known for playing Eomer in *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy, and Dr. Leonard McCoy in the 2009 film *Star Trek*. He also played Vaako in *The Chronicles of Riddick* and the Russian assassin Kirill in *The Bourne Supremacy*. Put this Kiwi in the sun for a year (and a knife fight) and he's a dead ringer for Marston.

THE OPS FLOWCHART

HOW'S YOUR AI?

AI means Artificial Intelligence, but in some games it can just as easily stand for Absolute Idiocy. Let's take an inside look into what makes digital stupidity tick.



TOP 10 DESIRABLE PSONE DOWNLOADS (THAT YOU'LL PROBABLY ONLY WANT TO PLAY ONCE. TOPS)

Soon, very soon, PS3 owners may have the chance to access a premium online service, with unlimited streaming retro games on demand. This could be an incredible opportunity... to remind us just how lucky we are to live in the 21st Century. Here are some famous (and infamous) games of the PSone era that are probably best left to Rest In Peace.



STAR WARS: MASTERS OF TERÄS KÄSI

You know how George Lucas has this huge bureaucratic staff in place to ensure that any product that bears the *Star Wars* name meets certain minimal standards of quality? Sometimes they bump the bunk. Even before Jar Jar Binks scarred our eyes, the gaming world suffered this tepid 3D fighter. *Masters of Teräs Käsi* is LucasArts's answer to a question no-one asked. An extra special kind of bad this game was.



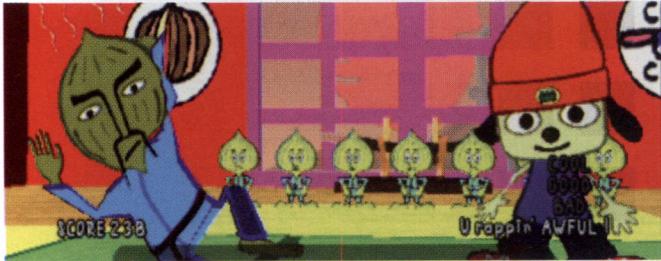
FINAL FANTASY VII

Everyone has that one game that they fondly remember. If *FFVII* wasn't your first love, no amount of studied interest is going to give it the same place in your heart. Even if you can get past the über-dated character models, you cannot escape the spoilers — for instance, there's an entire website called 'Aries Dies'. Oh, and then there's the time factor, too. If you've got a spare 100 hours to burn through on a whim, then chances are you're in prison, or chronically unemployed.



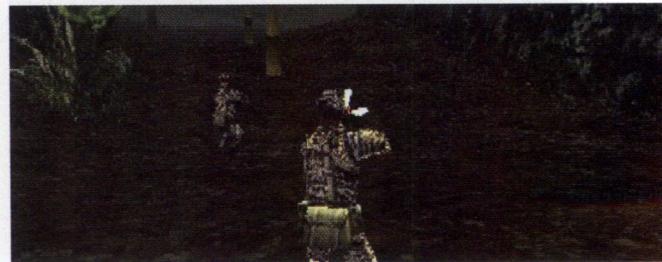
QUAKE II

This one would be worth it just for the morbid curiosity value. Not that there's anything wrong with making ambitious first-person shooters for consoles. The low frame rate on *Perfect Dark* was part of the charm. And we certainly don't have anything against id; the world simply would not be the same without *Doom* (and *Commander Keen*). But *Quake II* on the PSone was a bridge too far. The equivalent today would be trying to get *Crysis* to work on the Wii: not a pretty sight.



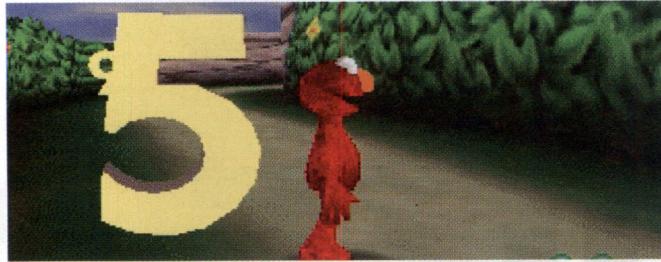
PARAPPA THE RAPPER

It was revolutionary! It was hilarious! It was a decade ahead of its time! Yet this iconoclastic artistic collaboration from edgy New York artist Rodney Greenblat and oddball game designer Masaya Matsura only had, like, six songs in it. That seemed like good value at the time, but only because the punishing difficulty meant it took forever to get one's timing down. Parappa is still kind of charming, but tastes have changed. Only his moral is timeless: 'I gotta believe!'



SPEC OPS: STEALTH PATROL

Now that an incredibly wicked series reboot for this special forces third/first person action franchise is on the way, you may be sorely tempted to see where it all began. Do so, and you will scold your eyes. Crumby graphics, horrid frame-rate, glitchy environments, and painfully simplistic mission objectives are assembled with the care and grace of a baby drooling on its blocks. We're so used to good textures these days, we've forgotten what bad ones look like. This is a refresher course.



ELMO'S NUMBER JOURNEY

'What kind of a game could possibly score 3%' you may ask yourself. This is the answer. Elmo runs through hedge mazes finding giant numbers, and knocking them over. For the full edutainment experience, be sure to check out *Elmo's Letter Adventure*, too. No amount of research could tell us just how many copies this game actually sold. Not many, we're figuring. This paragraph was brought to you by the number 5.



RESIDENT EVIL

Everyone remembers how the first *Resident Evil* reinvented the horror genre, and brought zombies back into the mainstream after a decade in the wilderness. Unsurprisingly, no-one remembers the God-awful acting, the interminable loading screens, and the pole-up-your-arse control scheme. After repeating those flaws for two sequels running, we're beginning to wonder if *Resident Evil 4* was a fluke.



WIPEOUT

One poor soul writing for this magazine actually went out and bought the game disc for this one, long, long ago. Sure, it was mind-blowing when released. But when you're already accustomed to its superior sequels (2097, *Wip3out*), you can only notice the flaws. For instance, your anti-gravity rocket car will grind to a complete stop if you so much as touch the walls of the track. Only worth sampling for the laughably dated dance music – and the RAGE.



BMX XXX

An open world *Dave Mirra BMX* sequel where completing sub-quests earns you tickets to a low-fi, low-res peep show? Willikers! Crass sexism only works if you can pull it off with a nod and wink, and a bit of class. This had crassness without smut, jokes without laughs, and above all, sizzle without steak. It was really controversial at the time, though, so curiosity may yet kill your proverbial cat. Wait a minute. No, this was on PS2. Darn.



THE FLINTSTONES: BEDROCK BOWLING

Originally conceived of as a 10 pin bowling game, somewhere along the line Mr. Management decided the game would sell more copies if it was literally impossible to lose your life and fail a level. So they changed it to a game where the members of everybody's favourite modern stone-age family would stand in giant coconut halves, and slide through crude obstacle courses. Morbidly fascinating to watch, this is the definitive 'train wreck' gaming experience.



**AVAILABLE
ON DVD
FEBRUARY
17**

"Slick and blessed with good action instincts"

- ANIME NEWS NETWORK

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BORDERS.

JB HI-FI
ALWAYS CHEAPEST PRICES

WOW
Sight & Sound

Gametraders
United in play

MADMAN.COM.AU

VIZ
media

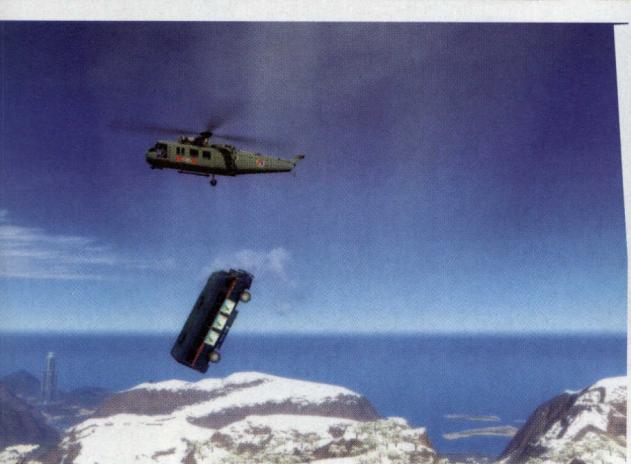
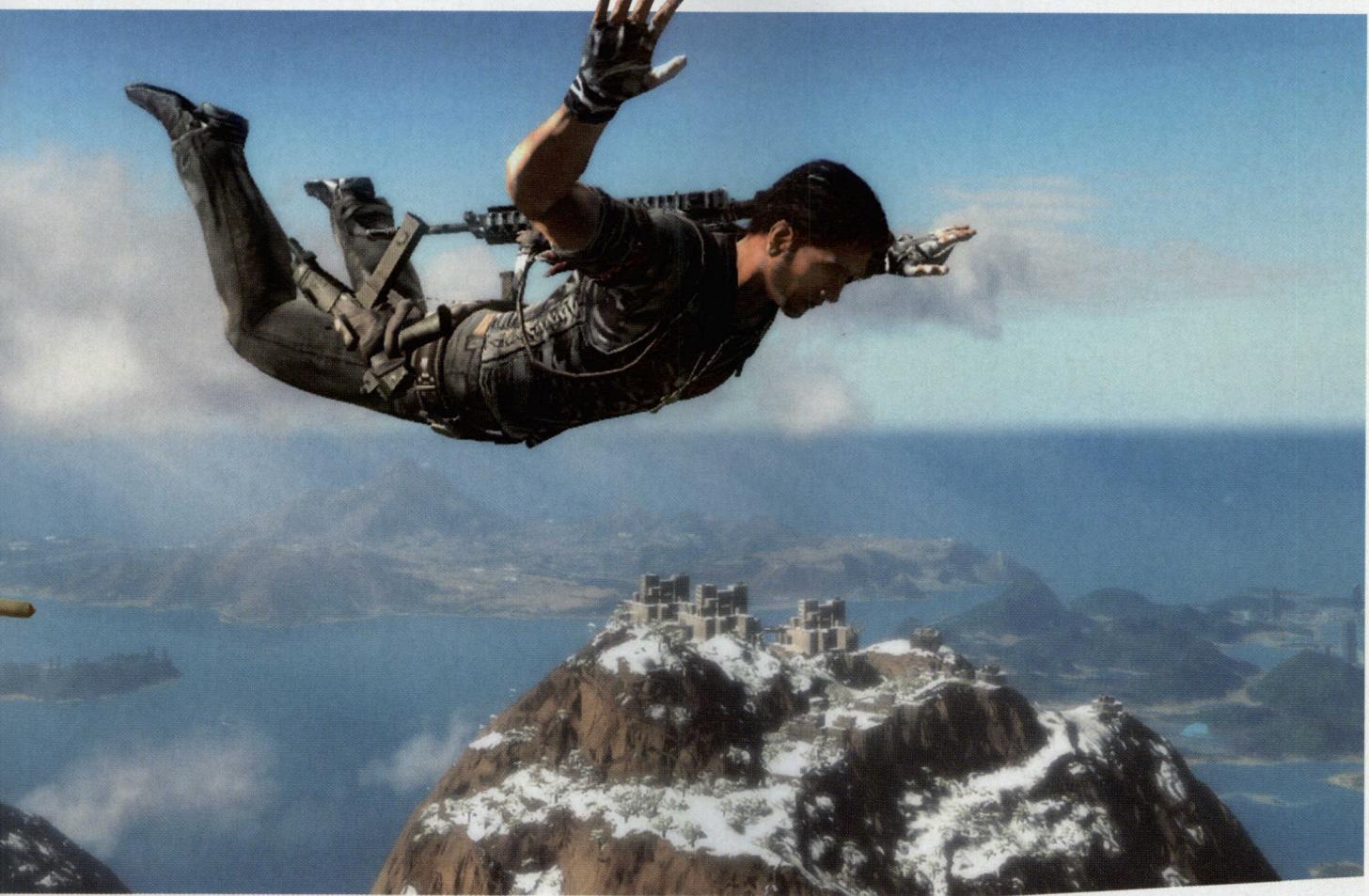


MADMAN

JUST CAUSE 2

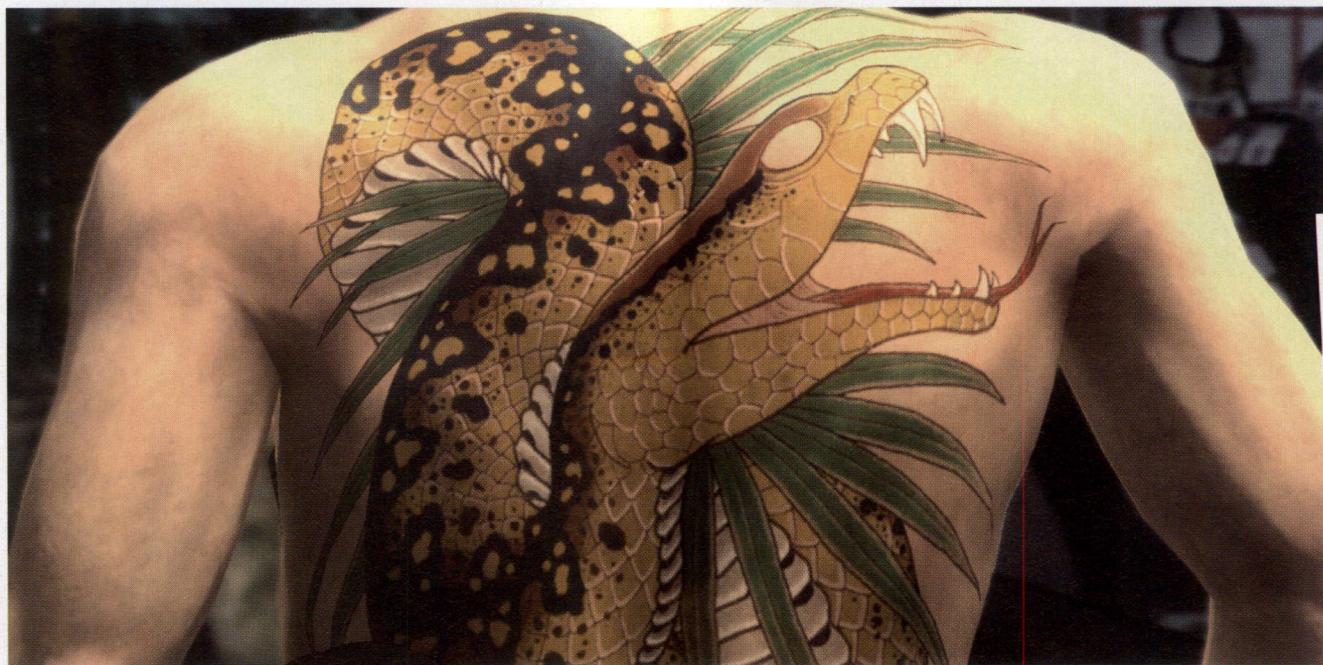
Balls-to-the-wall doesn't even begin to describe the action in Avalanche's follow-up to its highly-ambitious debut. Who knew a grappling hook and a parachute were all you needed?

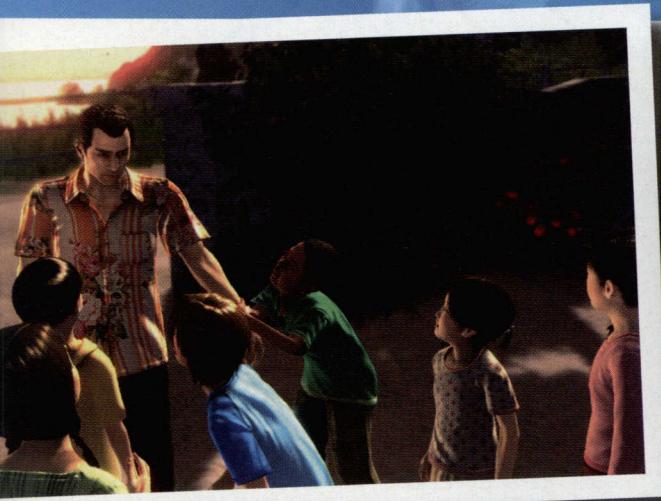




YAKUZA 3

The highly-respected underworld series heads to PS3's outside of Japan for the first time in March. As you can see, it looks absolutely spectacular. *Heavy Rain*, eat your heart out.





AROUND THE WORLD IN PS3

OPS trawls high and low for what's going on around the globe in gaming



ITALY, EUROPE RED CARD EFFORT

An Italian father has been knifed after offering his son some pointers on *FIFA*. An argument broke out, leading the father to turn off his son's TV as punishment. The 16-year-old then went to the kitchen and returned to stab his father in the neck. The father is in a stable condition and the police have made an arrest. Apparently his parents bought *FIFA* instead of *GTA* because it was "too violent".

NURBURGRING, GERMANY LAP BATTLE, COMMENCE!

Toyota is tapping into the PlayStation generation with a GPS-based track timing system developed with the makers of the GT5. The system, which was trialled on a race-prepared Lexus IS-F supercar at Germany's Nurburgring, allows the driver to record a lap time on a real race track, then play it back on Gran Turismo. Awesome idea!

BEIJING, CHINA FISH IN A BARREL

In an effort to "purify the social environment", China recently started a crackdown on the spreading of pornographic contents through the Internet. The government received more than 90,000 tip-offs about porn sites and rewarded 215 whistle blowers with cash. Easiest. Money. In the world.

SEOUL, KOREA GETTIN' (VIRTUALLY) PAID

During a recent court case where two gamers were accused of illegally profiting by trading in-game currency for real cash (i.e. gold farming), South Korea's apex court not only acquitted the accused but also ruled that in-game or virtual currency is to be treated on par with real currency. This is hailed as a landmark ruling that will impact future laws.

CANBERRA, AUSTRALIA GAMING ON THE RISE

The video games industry in Australia could soon be worth more than DVD sales and box office takings combined. Figures released the iGEA revealed the video games industry notched up a record \$2.05 billion in total sales during the 2009 calendar year. Gaming: it reigns supreme.

INTERNATIONAL CHARTS



UK Source: ELSPA

1	Modern Warfare 2	Activision
2	Uncharted 2: Among Thieves	Sony
3	Bayonetta	Sega
4	Assassin's Creed II	Ubisoft
5	Darksiders	THQ
6	FIFA 10	EA
7	Need for Speed SHIFT	EA
8	Batman: Arkham Asylum	Eidos
9	Avatar	Ubisoft
10	The Saboteur	EA



JAPAN Source: VGChartz

1	Final Fantasy XIII	Square Enix
2	Operation Flashpoint: Dragon Rising	Codemasters
3	COD: Modern Warfare 2	Activision
4	Batman: Arkham Asylum	Eidos
5	Winning Eleven 2010	Konami
6	COD4: Modern Warfare	Activision
7	Ryu Ga Gotoku 3 (Yakuza 3)	Sega
8	Assassin's Creed II	Ubisoft
9	Mina na Golf 5	Sony
10	MGS4: Guns of the Patriots	Konami



USA Source: NPD

1	Army of Two: The 40th Day	EA
2	Modern Warfare 2	Activision
3	Darksiders	THQ
4	Assassin's Creed II	Ubisoft
5	Bayonetta	Sega
6	Uncharted 2: Among Thieves	Sony
7	Madden NFL 10	EA
8	Uncharted: Drake's Fortune	Sony
9	Dead Space	EA
10	God of War Collection	Sony

RELEASE SCHEDULE

Coming soon to a store near you...

FEBRUARY 2010

MAG
GENRE: SHOOTER
DISTRIBUTOR: SONY

BioShock 2
GENRE: SHOOTER
DISTRIBUTOR: 2K

Dante's Inferno
GENRE: ACTION
DISTRIBUTOR: EA

Aliens Vs. Predator
GENRE: SHOOTER
DISTRIBUTOR: SEGA

Heavy Rain
GENRE: ADVENTURE
DISTRIBUTOR: SONY

Star Ocean
GENRE: RPG
DISTRIBUTOR: SEGA

White Knight Chronicles
GENRE: ADVENTURE
DISTRIBUTOR: THQ

Guitar Hero: Van Halen
GENRE: MUSIC
DISTRIBUTOR: ACTIVISION

Dynasty Warriors: Strikeforce
GENRE: ACTION
DISTRIBUTOR: SEGA

MARCH 2010

BlazBlue: Calamity Trigger
GENRE: FIGHTING
DISTRIBUTOR: AIE

Resonance of Fate
GENRE: RPG
DISTRIBUTOR: SEGA

PS3
Yakuza 3
GENRE: ACTION
DISTRIBUTOR: SEGA

PS3
Final Fantasy XIII
GENRE: RPG
DISTRIBUTOR: UBISOFT

PS3
God of War III
GENRE: ACTION
DISTRIBUTOR: SONY

PS3
Battlefield: Bad Company 2
GENRE: SHOOTER
DISTRIBUTOR: EA

PS3
MotoGP 09/10
GENRE: RACING
DISTRIBUTOR: THQ

PS3
Just Cause 2
GENRE: ACTION
DISTRIBUTOR: NAMCO BANDAI PARTNERS

PS3
Lost Planet 2
GENRE: ADVENTURE
DISTRIBUTOR: THQ

APRIL 2010

PS3
Red Dead Redemption
GENRE: ACTION
DISTRIBUTOR: ROCKSTAR

TBC 2010

PS3
Gran Turismo 5
GENRE: RACING
DISTRIBUTOR: SONY

PS3
Mafia II
GENRE: ACTION
DISTRIBUTOR: 2K

PS3
Arcania
GENRE: RPG
DISTRIBUTOR: AFA

PS3
Castlevania: Lords of Shadow
GENRE: ACTION
DISTRIBUTOR: NAMCO BANDAI PARTNERS

PS3
RAGE
GENRE: SHOOTER
DISTRIBUTOR: EA

PS3
Clash of the Titans
GENRE: ACTION
DISTRIBUTOR: NAMCO BANDAI PARTNERS

PS3
R.U.S.E.
GENRE: RTS
DISTRIBUTOR: UBISOFT

PS3
Sonic & Sega All-Stars Racing
GENRE: RACING
DISTRIBUTOR: SEGA

PS3
Blur
GENRE: RACING
DISTRIBUTOR: ACTIVISION

PS3
Medal of Honor
GENRE: SHOOTER
DISTRIBUTOR: EA

PS3
Alpha Protocol
GENRE: RPG
DISTRIBUTOR: SEGA

PS3
Brink
GENRE: SHOOTER
DISTRIBUTOR: NAMCO BANDAI PARTNERS

PS3
Crysis 2
GENRE: SHOOTER
DISTRIBUTOR: EA

PS3
Majin The Fallen Realm
GENRE: ACTION
DISTRIBUTOR: NAMCO BANDAI PARTNERS

PS3
Tony Hawk: Ride
GENRE: SPORT
DISTRIBUTOR: ACTIVISION

PS3
Naughty Bear
GENRE: ADVENTURE
DISTRIBUTOR: TBA

PS3
Singularity
GENRE: SHOOTER
DISTRIBUTOR: ACTIVISION

PS3
Final Fantasy XIV
GENRE: RPG
DISTRIBUTOR: TBA

PS3
Agent
GENRE: ACTION
DISTRIBUTOR: ROCKSTAR

PS3
Max Payne 3
GENRE: SHOOTER
DISTRIBUTOR: ROCKSTAR

PS3
ModNation Racers
GENRE: RACING
DISTRIBUTOR: SONY

PS3
Split/Second
GENRE: RACING
DISTRIBUTOR: MADMAN

PS3
Enslaved
GENRE: ACTION
DISTRIBUTOR: NAMCO BANDAI PARTNERS

PS3
Dead Rising 2
GENRE: ACTION
DISTRIBUTOR: THQ

PS3
Metal Gear Solid Rising
GENRE: ACTION
DISTRIBUTOR: NAMCO BANDAI PARTNERS

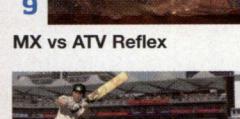
PS3
Super Street Fighter IV
GENRE: FIGHTER
DISTRIBUTOR: THQ

PS3
L.A. Noire
GENRE: ADVENTURE
DISTRIBUTOR: ROCKSTAR

PS3
Naughty Bear
GENRE: ADVENTURE
DISTRIBUTOR: TBA

AUSTRALIAN CHARTS

Source: GfK



QUOTE UNQUOTE

Industry chatter, inside tips and loose lips



"They are bad games. They were poorly rated because they were bad games." **Activision's boss Bobby Kotick** laments the woeful ratings of the last few *Spider-Man* games. Accepting you have a problem is the first step.



"Those games they call 'PlayStation' are poison. Some games teach you to kill. They once put my face on a game, 'you've got to find Chavez to kill him.'" **Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez** makes up a lie. The 'kill Chavez' game? *Mercenaries 2*.



"The PS3 hardware has a very high peak performance. The better you manipulate it, the better it performs." **Polyphony Digital's Kazunori Yamauchi** confesses *GT5* uses roughly 80 per cent of the PS3's power.



"I'm humbled by all this. I feel blessed." **Nolan North** upon having an entire award named after him by site Giant Bomb. The category? 'The Northies', for best voice acting in a game. North, of course, took it home for *Uncharted 2*.



FILL MY SACK WITH PIGLETS!



“The reward is usually something like a funny hat”

Hypothetical for ya'll: let's say that there is, in fact, an afterlife. Let's play pretend and say that it is everything you ever wanted and more.

So you lob up to the pearly gates, glimpsing frothy rivers of beer and busty, dusky-haired women riding skateboards naked (it's my thing, okay? Don't judge me, readers), when the old bloke at the door stops you with that familiar bouncer 'none-shall-pass' look and asks:

"Did you collect all the piglets?"

"I didn't know I had to collect all the piglets..." you stammer, a sinking feeling in the pit of your stomach.

"It's optional," he replies, "But if you didn't, you have to spend eternity in Rooty Hill RSL. There's a chook raffle on right now."

Nightmarish, yes? Indeed, but that's the very feeling a whole lot of games have been giving your humble word janitor of late.

Example? *Ratchet & Clank Future: A Crack in Time*. For my money it's possibly the best of the series, but as is the way with platformers you need to do a lot of collecting. Bolts, weapon parts and even the mysterious Zoni can be nabbed as you and your robotic life partner hoon through space and time.

Now, if you're like me, you're a trifle lazy – so you don't really get all that excited about collecting things. We've got good reason to be unmotivated. The reward is usually something like a funny hat.

Not in this game, matey! If you haven't picked up all the Zoni you miss out on fighting and killing a boss character who is central to the story! Now this would be slightly less egregious if they'd told you up front – but the message you get is "Collect all the Zoni for a surprise."

A boss shouldn't be "a surprise", it's part of the story. Bing that it's part of the game's narrative it shouldn't be optional!

Right?

Assassin's Creed II has a similar deal with the Codex pages. You need to collect them all, but to do so requires bulk faffing about. If you've yet to play the second Creed adventure, keep an eye on the Codex count and try to get all of them in the map you're traversing, otherwise you'll be revisiting cities for bloody hours. It really stops the game dead.

Darksiders, an otherwise fine game, pulls a nasty swiftie on you as well. After you kill a whole bunch of monsters, then go through the Dark Throne level (which feels like playing *Portal* while a gibbon rabbit-punches you in the scrotum) you have to "revisit" a whole bunch of realms to assemble a sword that, inexplicably, isn't even mentioned until the three-quarter mark.

Look, I'm not naïve. I understand that sometimes a game needs to extend the adventure but would it be too much to ask to make it fun? These Easter egg hunts may be to mind side-scrolling, 2D platformers but is that really what they're going for?

Uncharted 2 features treasure that can then be used to enhance the multiplayer experience. It's not a long single player game, but it's righteously fun and it never feels like you're doing the game equivalent of "busy work".

Of course, I'm the first person to have a sook when a title is too short, but I'd rather 10 fun hours than 40+ where a high percentage of it is going back to find stuff you didn't know needed finding. It's a cheap and unimaginative way for games to "double dip" and, like QuickTime, events should be given the arse.

In the meantime you might want to start collecting piglets.

Just in case.

Anthony O'Connor is a freelance videogame journalist who feels it's quite unfortunate for pigs that they taste so good.

BATTLEFIELD

BAD COMPANY 2



Cidden

FACTION: US
KIT: ENGINEER
RANK: 2ND LIEUTENANT I
VEHICLE: MH-68

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LTwin

FACTION: US
KIT: ENGINEER
RANK: SERGEANT I
WEAPON: M24

Bazajaytee

FACTION: RU
KIT: MEDIC
RANK: CORPORAL III
WEAPON: PKM

Demize99

FACTION: RU
KIT: ASSAULT
RANK: WARRANT OFFICER I
VEHICLE: QUAD BIKE

oGvDo

FACTION: US
KIT: ASSAULT
RANK: 1ST SERGEANT
WEAPON: AEK-971

KleanupGuy

FACTION: US
KIT: ENGINEER
RANK: MASTER SERGEANT I
WEAPON: RPG-7

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XBOX 360.

XBOX
LIVE.

PC
DVD

PlayStation Network



PS3.

DICE



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OFFICIAL PLAYSTATION
ADAM MATHEW

SCREW THE LOCOMOTION

Millions of years from now scientists will be pondering thearse-print in my gaming chair. It'll baffle the finest brains among them. It will melt the logic-core of their Skynet overlord. The glorious double-bun formation forged in my lounge isn't so much an imprint, as the grand canyon is just a divot in the ground. No, my lounge legacy is something else. There's an almost *breathtaking* majesty to it and, once discovered, I'm confident it'll also be a popular destination for tourists.

How – the pointdexters shall debate – could an otherwise upwardly-mobile human erode such a durable surface using only his sweet, sweet can? Well, let me explain myself from the grave, eggheads; I was a first generation videogamer who refused to stand for motion-based controllers. I also had the basic knowledge

of how a colostomy bag works. Mine was a golden era.

Which brings me to today's topic; colostomy bags are full of sh... no, wait – wrong topic. Let me start that again. Motion-based controls are full of shoddiness and I don't think that they're the proper evolution of videogaming. Years of sci-fi cinema has conditioned me into thinking that we should be moving away from moving.

Instead of making me flail about like a simpleton – or even twiddle my thumbs at all – my PS4 should jack into the back of my melon, a la *The Matrix*. I should be strapped into my PS5 via a Leonardo Da Vinci wheel and VR shades like *The Lawnmower Man*. I expect to materialise onto the motherboard of my PS6 wearing a dorky, neon stackhat like *Tron*. Why? Because one: I don't want to ever move my body unnecessarily, and two: bitches love stackhats.

My disdain towards bodily locomotion can be summed up with the phrase 'bone-arsed laziness'. After a long day at work (commuting, walking, pretending to contribute to society) I'm tired. So very, very, tired. I therefore don't want to

spend my 'me time' physically slashing my on-screen sword with my entire being, or leaping off the lounge to curb stomp that boss in his genital weakspot. I want a button, or a thought process, that will initiate demon junk stomp. That way I can do it repeatedly, and not have to die of a stroke and earn a ridiculous obituary afterwards.

I think you all see where I'm going here. Motion-based controls may be 'teh bombz' for the casual nitwits of the world, but I can't see them being much more than an annoyance for us hardcore. That's my down-to-earth/lounge opinion. I am hereby taking a stand (metaphorically, my legs lost feeling six hours ago) against the motion-controller fad. They'll certainly be in the future, but they're not the future.

Think I'm crazy? Just cast your mind back to the scene in *Back to the Future II*, where the future kids call Marty McFly a 'baby' for using his hands to play a game. I submit to you that if you use your *whole* body to control a game in the future you'll be a goddamn foetus.

Adam Mathew wrote this wearing a stackhat.

“Years of sci-fi cinema has conditioned me into thinking that we should be moving away from moving”

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- IGN.com

www.blazblue.com.au



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- 1up.com

**score:
100**

"BlazBlue's online system puts titles like Street Fighter IV to shame"

- GamingAge.com

**score:
100**

"BlazBlue packs what may be the best online play ever seen in a 2D fighting game"

- GameSpy.com

**score:
90**



Available March 2010



PS3



XBOX 360

XBOX
LIVE



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BRICKS & MORTARS

If my sources are correct, what Kaz has in mind for the new-and-improved PSN is a kind of Netflix-style subscription service. For your yearly fee you'd get access to a huge bank of downloadable games – old emulated PSOne hits, like *Crash Bandicoot*,

“Some of us would be happy to pay a small fee each time we felt like dabbling in the past”

back when it was still made by Naughty Dog. Back when the series was good.

If this wild, hare-brained scheme succeeds, you could have an archive of thousands of games at your fingertips. You could indulge in every nostalgic whim at the press of a button.

It would be a pretty sweet deal, like cable TV, or satellite radio.

Yet there are some people out there in Internet Forum Land who are actually complaining about this. They're whining because you wouldn't actually 'own' any of these games. You'd only be renting them.

Well excuse me, princess.

In case you haven't noticed, you don't really own anything in this world. I'm not talking about property rights, the bedrock of our superior Western civilisation – 'possession is 9/10 of the law,' and all that. I'm talking about the simple, practical facts of life and matter: nothing lasts forever.

While your PS3 is far, far less likely to explode than an Xbox 360, it is not immortal. Its hard drive will fail. Its cooling fans will fail. Its disc-ejecting mechanism will fail. Eventually. That, or something else. It only takes one thing to go wrong to render the whole unit a brick. Chances are, that day won't come for many years. Our PS2s are still working. So is our PSOne. Your PS3 will probably live a long and happy life, before being consigned to a box in the garage. But it could yet die. Horribly, and at any moment. Then all you'll be able to do is stare at your old games, and possibly sniff the inside of the instruction booklets.

Nothing escapes decay. Magnetic discs can be wiped or corrupted, or simply crash. DVDs and Blu-rays can shatter. Manuals and boxes can rot. All these things can be lost... or stolen! Or seized in messy divorce settlements. Or struck by lightning.

The earth could subside, and swallow your house whole. A meteor could strike from space.

And even if your precious things are not destroyed while you draw breath, one day you yourself will expire. Perhaps, as with the house-pets of Dethklok, you will move on to a better place – 'Hamburger Time.' But you can't take any of your plastic crap with you.

Oh, and here's one more inconvenient truth: old games never get played anyway. Because you're sick of them! Because gaming is a rapidly-evolving art form, and what's king poop today is horse crap tomorrow. And the day after that? Embarrassing.

So if the crew at Sony want to charge a subscription fee for access to old games, then let them. Some of us would be happy to pay a small fee each time we felt like dabbling in the past, rather than clogging up every spare space in our house with old games we never touch. Do not complain. You can no more own a video game than you can own your own flesh and blood anyway. All we ever have is a lease on life. That's what gives it meaning.

Time is short, and life is for living. Not for wandering graveyards. Leave that to The Ghost of Christmas Future. And the goths. Frankly, anyone who's miserable just by being alive deserves to suffer.

Angry Sackboy is deep, man.

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COMPETITIONS

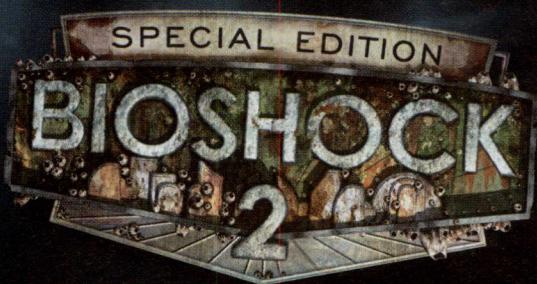
WIN! WIN! WIN!

INTO THE DEEP END

Thanks to the stand-up folks at 2K Games we've got five copies of the undersea epic *BioShock 2* to give away. But they're not just any old copies, they're the super-snazzy special editions – packed with extra goodies you'll never get anywhere else.

For a chance to win one of these great prizes, answer the question below and follow the entry instructions at the bottom of this page.

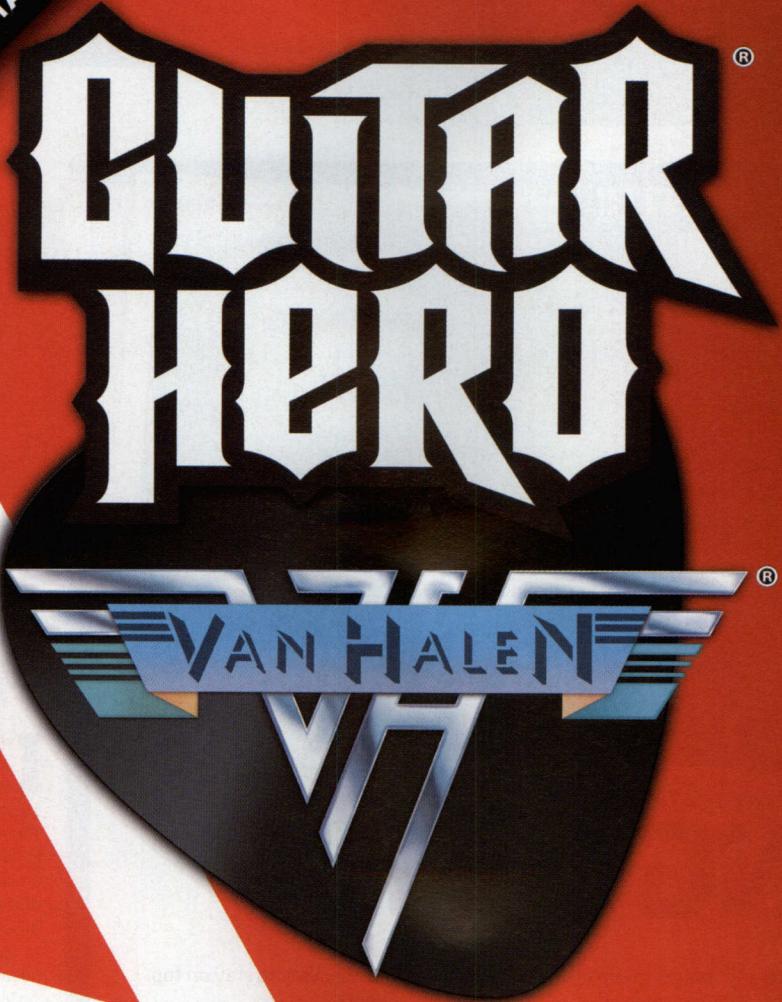
Question: In 25 words or less, if you could create a plasmid what would it be called and what would it do?



HOW TO ENTER

To enter *Official PlayStation Magazine* competitions email your entries to ops@derwenthoward.com.au with the name of the competition ONLY in the subject line. Email entries are entitled to one entry (multiple entries will be deleted!). Alternatively, send clearly marked postal entries to OPS competitions PO BOX 1037, Bondi Junction 1355. Please include your name, age and address with your answer on the back of an envelope. Chance plays no part in determining winners. Competitions close 31/03/2010. Winners will be notified by mail.

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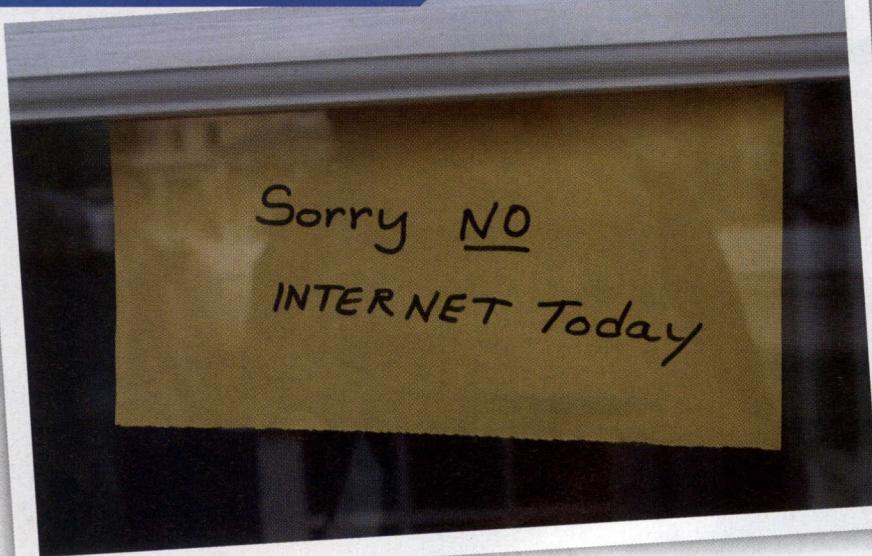
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Speak to us!

LETTER OF THE MONTH!



GOING SOLO

G'day dudes and dudettes, the mag's a damn good laugh which really does matter, no matter what the other magazines think.

The main issue I'd like to raise is one that probably isn't an issue for most folks, but is very, very sad for people like myself. I live in a small town in rural Western Australia. The sort of small town that has a pub and an IGA and virtually nothing else.

We manage a trip to the city once or twice a year, during which time I can pick up a game or two. Because of these limitations, I need to get games that are both ace and re-playable. Back in the PS2 days, all re-playable meant to me was an "Instant Battle" or "Free Play" mode, you know, bots and stuff. Now that online play has become so mainstream, these features have practically disappeared leaving people without their own internet connection a game which is a few hours long and only good for a few completions and for people like me, that really isn't worth the money.

Now, I understand that for game developers and publishers to exist, they need to make a profit and to make profit they need to please the

bigger group of consumers. It just seems that with all this profit chasing, game companies have completely forgotten the rest of us, leaving us with too few games that satisfy our needs as gamers. (Even *Fallout 3* and *Oblivion* get old, but at least we can go back to them and have a new experience once we're done with *Modern Warfare 2* and *Dead Space*).

The other issue I'd like to briefly discuss is "That Level" from *Modern Warfare 2*. It was powerful, all right, but to be honest I still don't quite understand all the controversy over it. How is it different from slicing up people in *Prototype* or blowing up Megaton in *Fallout 3* or a typical five minutes in Liberty City? 'No Russian' introduces you to a bad, bad guy in a way that kind of makes hunting him down throughout the rest of the game feel almost like a personal goal and not simply an objective to cross off. What other game has ever made you feel that way?

But anyway, keep it up guys, it's

the only way to stay on top. Cheers.

Neil Pynenburg, via email

Thanks for the words of praise Neil. Sucks that you're stuck in the middle of a gaming desert, but that broadly describes Australia anyway compared to many First World countries, themselves a bigger group of consumers. We're all for local multiplayer and an expansive single player game, and some of the biggest and best games have been primarily single-player games: *Uncharted* and its sublime sequel, *GTA IV*, *BioShock*, *Heavy Rain*, *The Saboteur*. All of them offer loads of replayability and could occupy you for months. You're not the only person to comment on 'No Russian' so we'll save our comment 'til then. Have a game. A good one with plenty of choices that'll make you go back again and again to squeeze out every last story combination.



LETTER OF THE MONTH WINS...

BIOSHOCK 2

The letter of the month this issue will receive a copy of *BioShock 2* for their troubles – enjoy!



HACK ATTACK

I was recently playing *Borderlands* online and noticed an increased number of people that have obviously hacked the game. Level 70s running around, people firing 90 rockets at once causing the game to crash and people challenging you to a duel just so they can beat you with one bullet. Well done guys, you've proven to some 18-year-old living probably halfway around the world that you can download a program and change your save file. But it's not the players I blame for this, my blame rests with Gearbox. Someone that goes by the name of Mad Moxxi. People are always going to try to hack into games, it can add some fun to the gameplay. However with the sheer impossibility of Mad Moxxi's DLC people are almost forced into hacking. The only way I was able to make it through 100 waves was with four other players online who (except for me) had hacked guns. Sure it's not how the game was supposed to be played but at least this way the temptation to smash the TV is resisted. Gearbox said that they wanted to make it challenging, so why make it impossible for people that aren't ridiculously good at playing shooters. Add a difficulty setting, put in save points every 5 rounds, make the DLC doable for the average player, then and maybe then people wouldn't have to resort to hacking just to make it feel like they haven't been screwed out of their money.

Bradley Griffith, via email

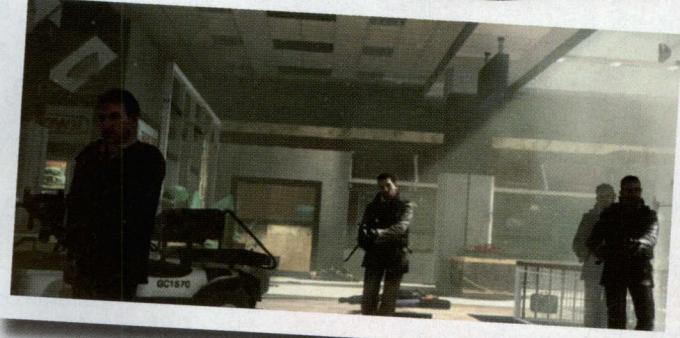
Your blame doesn't rest with the players who cheat? It should TOTALLY rest with the cheaters. We can empathise that Mad Moxxi's hard and will make you mad with its challenge – we made up four new swear words playing it to bring you the review on p79 – but cheating just makes us insane. You're never 'forced' into cheating, you should just be forced into being better at the game. Or learning to curse in very creative ways.

NO RUSSIAN? NO PROBLEM

I was just writing to say that I don't think that Modern Warfare 2 should be getting the bad rap over the 'No Russian' Mission. I don't think it's fair that an equally awesome and violent game such as GTAIV lets have you killing innocents and not get abused. They are both amazing games and neither of them deserve any slander. To tell you the truth I didn't mind the mission and didn't find it over the top or offensive in any way. Much like I didn't mind mowing down groups of Liberty city pedestrians.

James Garland, via email

It all comes down to choice, we think. The 'No Russian' level has us divided, not on whether it's controversial, but whether it's a well-made mechanic – but we digress. The controversy is a bit over the top (bannings? Puh-lease), but what separates it from games such as GTA, Prototype and Fallout 3 that you and Che Patterson listed is what you're able to do and what you must do. At some point during 'No Russian' you have to pull the trigger. In GTA you can choose whether to clip civilians who have no impact on your actions.



THE OPS FACEBOOK PAGE NEEDS YOU!

STOREFRONT

We play the games so you can pick the cream from the crock. What deliciousness have you bought lately?



ALEX OSTLE

Colin McRae: DiRT 2

"I tried the demo and liked it. Solid gameplay and overall presentation. It's also very rewarding - there are heaps of trophies. I still haven't finished it though!"



MATT BLOOR

Bomberman Ultra

"I loved Bomberman and it was cheap."



MARK & JULIE BLACKMAN

The Saboteur

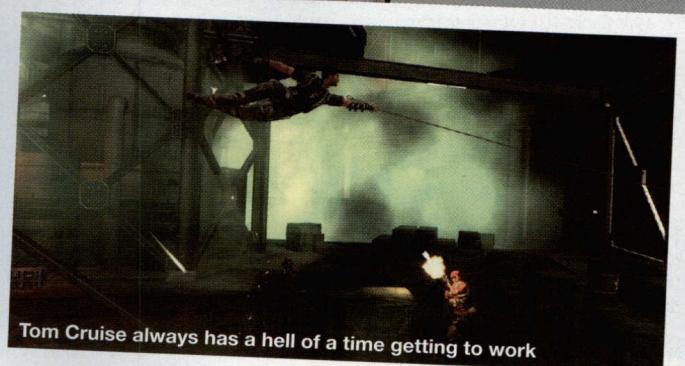
"It's the final game from Pandemic, and the concept of the colour change from black/grey to full colour was intriguing. Fact it's quite a decent game was a bonus!"



JAMES ROSSITER

Dragon Age: Origins

"For the characters have the ability to have sex with underwear on. That right there takes skill. Oh and the gameplay of course... always the gameplay."



Tom Cruise always has a hell of a time getting to work

CAPTION THIS!

Take one screenshot and release it to the Facebook mob. Many good entries as usual, but the winner this month came from Matthew Falzon. Well done Matthew!

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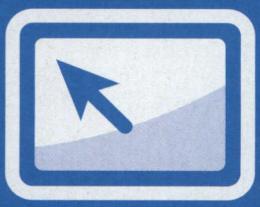


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IN COMING

Exclusive looks at the very best



34 TRUE CRIME
The MIA series returns for a trip to Honkers!



PS3 | GENRE: ACTION | EXPECTED RELEASE: APRIL 30 | DISTRIBUTOR: ROCKSTAR
| DEVELOPER: ROCKSTAR SAN DIEGO | PLAYERS: 1 (MULTI TBA)

RED DEAD REDEMPTION

We don't need no stinkin' badges!

Not only have we just come back from our first hands-on with the one 2010 game we've been dying to play more than any other, we've also received a little more insight into what makes John Marston tick. We knew he was a reformed outlaw, but what we didn't know is that the reason he left his life of crime in the first place was because he was wounded in a botched heist and left for buzzard bait by the rest of his gang.

After three years as a law-abiding man, Marston has a wife and a son on a quiet farm. This is when the feds come knocking – eager to enlist Marston to help round up his old pals. When he refuses, the government agents take his family and threaten to kill them unless he agrees to work for them. This is how *Red Dead Redemption* will kick off.

More importantly, however, we've been able to finally how the game truly works. The first mission of our most recent demo saw Marston working as a triggerman for a brash

Mexican Army kingpin called DeSanta. During this mission Marston and a squad of Mexican soldiers succeed in crushing a large group of rebels. We see Marston's crude scoped rifle, which has a lens like looking through the bottom of a coke bottle and is filthy around the edges. It certainly feels faithful to the era. We see Euphoria hard at work, generating death animations on the fly as Marston blazes his way across a ridge into the rebel stronghold. We see Marston's new close-kills – pull the trigger near enough to an enemy and Marston will get up close and personal. We see how the cover system works similarly to GTAIV, but the aiming system is slightly different. Aim near enough to an enemy, pull down manual aim and you'll lock-on – just like GTAIV. Unlike GTAIV, however, move the reticle around and you'll find it's not soft-locked to your target. You can move off your target and elsewhere. We see it looks very, very good.

Our second mission saw Marston meet with the gruff but fair Sheriff Johnson. For Johnson, apprehending Marston one-time associate Bill Williamson is one task on a growing list of problems his town is facing. Marston offers his help, presumably hoping Johnson will return the favour. We learn two more things as this mission begins. Whistle and your horse will come to you, plus there's a handy (and optional) auto-ride function to allow you to follow another horse easily. The mission is simple – kill of bunch of problem



THE PITCH

The attention to detail of the likes of GTAIV combined with the late Western - *The Wild Bunch*, *Deadwood*, etc.





36 HARRY POTTER
The LEGO formula returns to bewitch us once more.



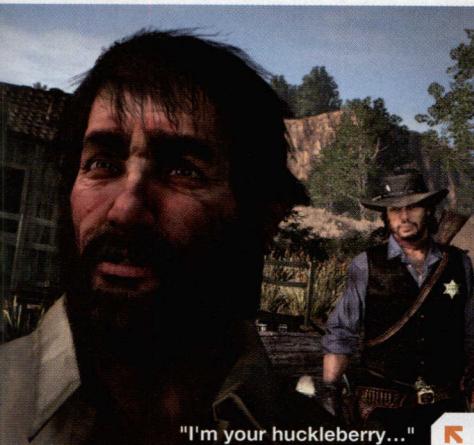
37 NAUGHTY BEAR
It's bear on bear action in this darkly comedic title.



38 BLAZBLUE
It's weird, bright, colourful... and... well, did we mention it's weird?



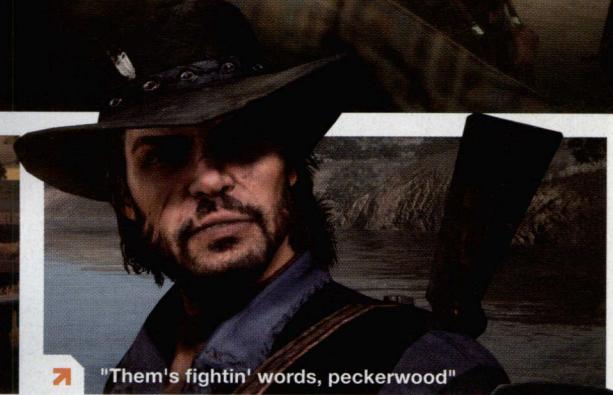
40 PRINCE OF PERSIA
The prince comes back swinging in this series reboot.



"I'm your huckleberry..."

"Uh, sheriff, please aim... higher"

"The key thing we took away is that there's simply a massive amount of detail"



"Them's fightin' words, peckerwood"



"Don't move. There's a spider on your back. I'll get him"

THIS IS YOUR WIFE

In an open letter, a group of Rockstar San Diego employee's wives have joined to protest against working conditions Rockstar San Diego. They allege the studio has been in a perpetual state of "crunch" since March of 2009, work hours are now nearly 12 hours a day, six days a week. Makin' games is tough.

The young girl was on the floor, and a mangy man was hovering above her. As he started to speak we shot him between the eyes. Apparently if we had waited until he finished he would've shot her in front of us.

The last mission was different altogether and saw Marston, with the aid of a drunkard Irishman, gunning his way down a heavily guarded mine to steal a Gatling gun. Shooting the oil lanterns above the head of enemies proved useful here, as did the double-barrelled shotgun. When we reached the gun we had to push it out in a mine cart. When we hit a decline, Marston clung from the back as it sped along the tracks, firing one-handed at any attackers.

The key thing we took away is that there's simply a massive amount of detail here. Flies buzz constantly around the faces of the people we speak to. Vultures circle corpses after shootouts. The plains at night are just breathtaking – with no pollution whatsoever the sky is blanketed with stars. Sunrise and sunset ain't half-bad either. The way tents and loose clothing flaps in the breeze – RAGE has cloth physics now. The dialogue, as you'd expect, is delivered without fault, and the sounds effects are bang on. Boots on boards, the crack of gunfire in open-space – nothing has been missed.

The amount of odd jobs and activities on offer is only slightly short of staggering. Bounty hunts, shooting and skinning game, tasks for local tradies... the list goes on. There's night watch, where you and a town's guard dog will watch over a town from dusk 'til dawn. There's poker in the saloons. There's so much, and that's not even counting the random stuff you'll come across out in the countryside.

Red Dead Redemption has been in the news over the past month or so, but unfortunately it's for all the wrong reasons (see 'This Is Your Wife'). If there is truth to the allegations, then that's simply not good enough on Rockstar's part. Having a negative effect on employee's family relationships to save a buck just cannot be condoned. We will say, however, that after our short hands-on we're struggling to see too many faults here. Even if development has been as chequered as it's being alleged, Rockstar San Diego seems to have prevented this from harming the project itself. *Red Dead Redemption* is perhaps our most eagerly anticipated release of 2010, and we think it'll remain that way.

If you can imagine the game *GUN* wanted to be, you can imagine *Red Dead Redemption*. Gritty, action-packed and bloody as hell, if Clint Eastwood had a PS3 this is what he'd put in it.

Fill your hands. Luke Reilly

THEY SAY

"This is our vision of the American West: beautiful, bloody and action-packed. The game is a true epic"

WE SAY

A massive open-world - simultaneously ugly and beautiful - absolutely stuffed with activities and life. Oh, and it has cowboys. We're in.

Bad shape	Needs work	Got potential	Looking good	Sure-thing

INCOMING

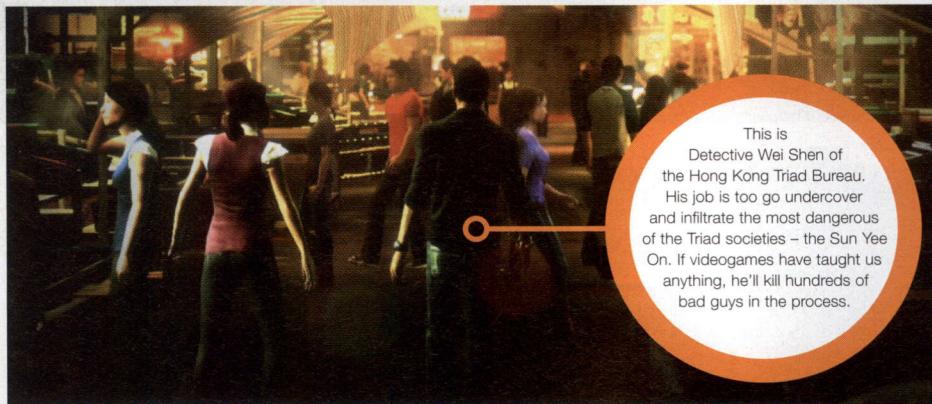
True Crime

PS3 | GENRE: ACTION | EXPECTED RELEASE: LATE 2010 | DISTRIBUTOR: ACTIVISION | DEVELOPER: UNITED FRONT GAMES | PLAYERS: 1 (TBC)

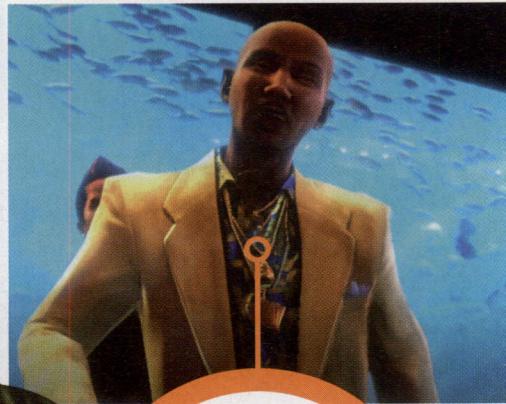
TRUE CRIME

Hit some Hong Kong mattress all night long

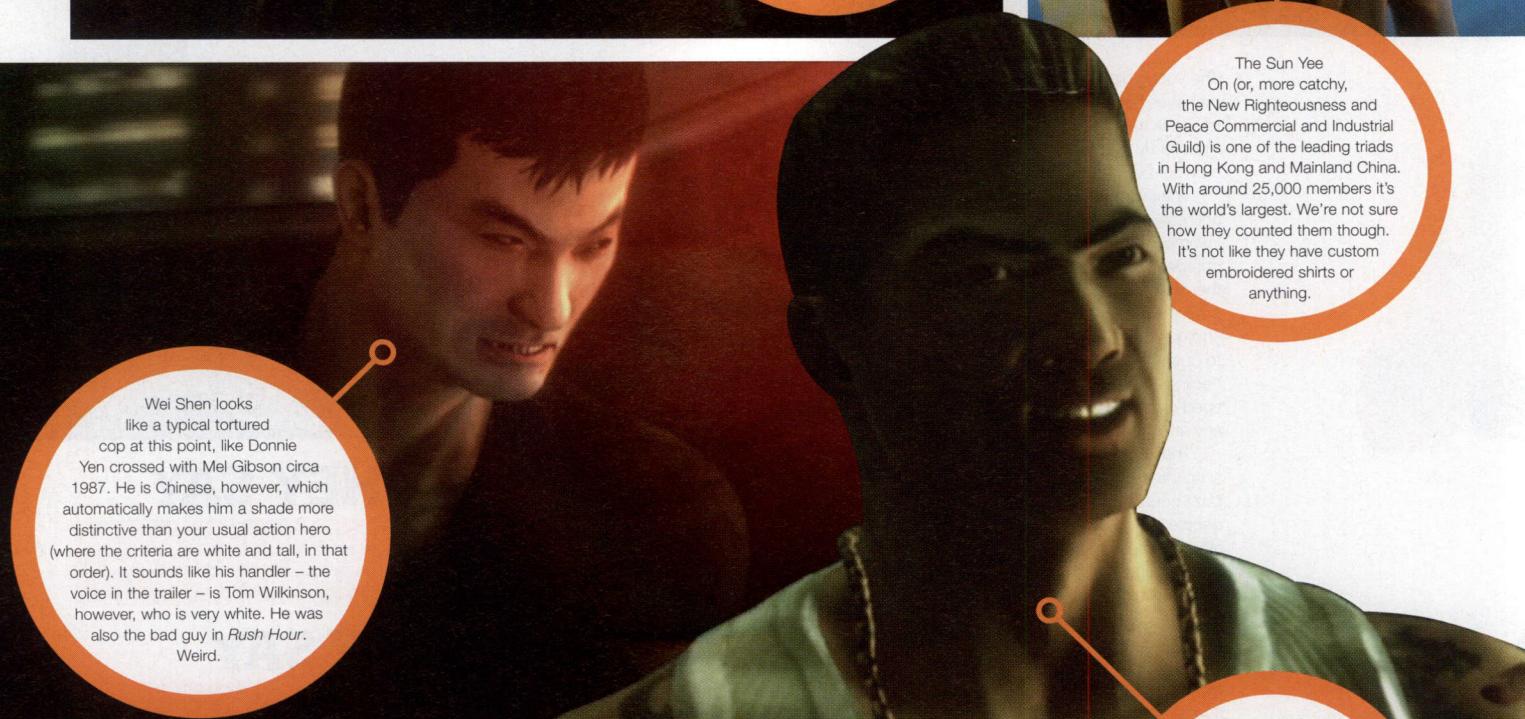
The setting: Hong Kong. We suspect the environment may completely focus on Hong Kong Island, given the franchise's previous dedication to geographical accuracy. We expect the diversity of the city will be well represented, from the high class shops of Central HK to the seedy parts where you go to get your gentleman's area professionally grappled.



This is Detective Wei Shen of the Hong Kong Triad Bureau. His job is too go undercover and infiltrate the most dangerous of the Triad societies – the Sun Yee On. If videogames have taught us anything, he'll kill hundreds of bad guys in the process.



The Sun Yee On (or, more catchy, the New Righteousness and Peace Commercial and Industrial Guild) is one of the leading triads in Hong Kong and Mainland China. With around 25,000 members it's the world's largest. We're not sure how they counted them though. It's not like they have custom embroidered shirts or anything.



THE PITCH

A series reboot that takes the series to the streets of Hong Kong. *Infernal Affairs* crossed with *SPL* meets *GTA*.



Wei Shen looks like a typical tortured cop at this point, like Donnie Yen crossed with Mel Gibson circa 1987. He is Chinese, however, which automatically makes him a shade more distinctive than your usual action hero (where the criteria are white and tall, in that order). It sounds like his handler – the voice in the trailer – is Tom Wilkinson, however, who is very white. He was also the bad guy in *Rush Hour*. Weird.

Triad activities generally include any combination of car theft, contract killing, drug trafficking, extortion, money laundering, gambling, prostitution, racketeering, counterfeiting. You can't see here, but this guy is actually cutting the head off a fish. We suspect it's a counterfeit fish.



At one point Wei Shun leaps from his motorcycle to a speeding police car, swinging himself feet-first through the driver's side window. *True Crime* looks quite gritty, and the fighting isn't overly-exaggerated – but it's nice United Front is willing to put realism on the backburner for the sake of good fun.

It appears there'll be a wider array of throws and moves than the PS2 instalments, and, if the action we've seen so far is any indication, it'll be faster and more fluid. The fighting appears more like you'd see in a fast-paced contemporary Asian cinema, and less like the old games – which were more akin to '80s Hollywood martial arts, more heavily staged and less organic.

Like previous *True Crime* titles, gameplay will be divided across martial arts action, driving and gun battles. United Front is adding "acrobatic free-running" to the mix. Ideally this will make for some exciting foot chases through the bustling alleys of Hong Kong.

Luxoflux, the studio behind the solid original and somewhat-too-hasty sequel, is not at the helm of the *True Crime* reboot. The new developer is United Front Games, developer of *ModNation Racers*. It's based in Vancouver. Fun fact: there are now more videogame studios in Vancouver than bears. Probably.

THEY SAY

"United Front Games has the vision to bring this new undercover game experience to life"

WE SAY

A new developer in charge, eager to impress, could mean good things. We like the setting and we love the fact the undercover element remains.

Bad shape	Needs work	Got potential	Looking good	Sure-thing	Guaranteed
			✗		

INCOMING

LEGO Harry Potter



Hermione makes you look dumber than DUPLO



THE PITCH

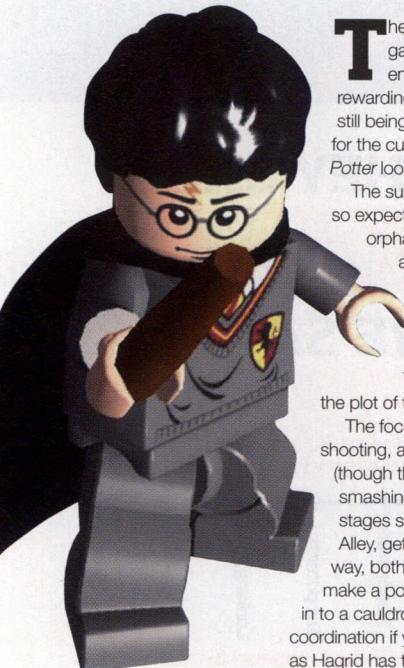
It's, uh, Harry Potter meets, um, LEGO? Brick building and smashing with loads of platforming and exploration.



PS3 | GENRE: ADVENTURE | EXPECTED RELEASE: MARCH | DISTRIBUTOR: WARNER BROS. | DEVELOPER: TRAVELLER'S TALES | PLAYERS: 1-2

LEGO HARRY POTTER

It's a kind of magic



The LEGO themed adventure games have always been entertaining and well made, rewarding fans of the source material but still being playable and highly entertaining for the cultural duds who aren't. Harry Potter looks to continue this trend.

The subtitle of the game is Years 1 – 4, so expect to see Harry's progression from orphan to Hogwarts student, as well as shakily flying broomsticks, learning spells and visiting the ginger kid's house. It's more than just lip service though, as while the fun inherent in Traveller's Tales' titles remains,

the plot of the game is faithful to the books.

The focus is less on fighting and shooting, and more on puzzle solving (though there's still a good amount of smashing stuff). One of the earliest stages sees Harry with Hagrid in Diagon Alley, getting his first wand. Along the way, both Hagrid and Harry have to make a potion by collecting items to toss in to a cauldron. Teamwork (or just good coordination if you're playing solo) is necessary, as Hagrid has to make a platform for Harry

to jump on and collect the ingredients. Both characters are playable either in single player or co-op, much like prior LEGO games, with more than 100 different characters available for you to take control of.

We can't really overstate how charming this looks. Mixing detailed, semi-realistic background mixed with painfully cute LEGO characters that have an astounding amount of expression on their digital plastic faces is a sound way to go. Telltale is spruking this as one of the best looking LEGO games, and we have to agree at this early stage.

Harry's school, Hogwarts, acts as a hub area of sorts, a place that not only links together the different stages or 'years' of his education, but also as a place for you to learn spells in class that are integral to your progression. The area itself is a labyrinth, that encourages exploration to collect every last LEGO stud available, and also to appreciate the crafting that's gone into making the school.

As fans of the movie will know, there's a lot that happens in the background at the school, as paintings on the wall come alive, which the game recreates while putting its own spin on the mythos of Harry Potter. Tramping through Hogwarts will be more than just a means to an

end, as the environment looks like it will offer lots of incidental goings-on.

We're looking forward to going back to school. **Paul Taylor**

THEY SAY

"An interactive journey that takes players through the most detailed and expansive LEGO environments yet"

WE SAY

It threatens to turn the harshest Potter fan into a wand-carrying wizard. It looks lush, and we can vouch for the humorous antics.

Bad shape	Needs work	Got potential	Looking good	Sure-thing
				X

THE PITCH

Sandbox elements of *GTA* meets the scare factor of *Batman* and *Manhunt*, with a dash of *Fairytales Fights*.



This 'Ted Bundy' is not one to stuff with

Bear-based beats before the beatdown



Long range farts are no (teddy bear's) picnic



PS3 | GENRE: ACTION | EXPECTED RELEASE: TBA | DISTRIBUTOR: AIE | DEVELOPER: A2M | PLAYERS: 1-4

NAUGHTY BEAR

If you go down to the woods today, take a shotgun



There are plenty of psychos in videogames, and playing as a warped character can be a cuckoo's nest full of fun. It's not enough to be mad though; even the most insane lunatic needs a human element. Enter the most innocent of childhood toys, the teddy bear, in quite an recognisable situation.

Our titular character, Naughty Bear, sulks about after not being invited to another birthday party. He also likes to play with knives in his bedroom. Deciding with the help of the narrator to deliver a present anyway in the hope of making friends, Naughty is laughed at by other bears on the island of Paradise. He's fairly adept with melee and ranged weapons, so decides on payback.

An open-world game, it's more than just running around committing random acts of violence, because

we all know how well *State Of Emergency* turned out. It reminds us more of *Batman: Arkham Asylum* and *Manhunt* more than *GTA* though, as you'll be engaged in psychological and physical warfare, aiming to scare the other bears and be as creative as possible in doing so in order to achieve your goal. Deviance is a must to gain scare your opponents and earning Naughty Points, which give you a scale of just how well you're doing.

Single-player will span 30-odd levels, with a range of weaponry to do dirty deeds. We don't have a solid number on the amount of weapons at this stage, but environmental objects play a part in your subversion.

Sure, you could just taunt a foe with a baseball bat, but creep up on him before hand will net you more points. Or you can trash his lunch, or smash another bear to bits in plain sight to make things even more intimidating. For the ultimate in sadism, you can torture a victim so much that he commits suicide. We are in no way joking about this. Being as creative (and utterly mental) as possible nets a high score to compare your antics online.

Online play extends to four players who will work together in teams. Multiplayer modes include capture the flag, king of the hill and search and find, plus in-game bears can be corralled into helping you out. They may, though, end up sabotaging your efforts, so we're looking forward to seeing how that will work.

You'll also be able to dress your growler as a cop, ninja and robot, amongst other things. Some costumes will be needed to fight higher level enemies as you progress so it's plausible that your costume choice will affect your ability to scare others, and thus your rank.

We can't wait to go on a killing spree in this teddy bear's picnic. **Paul Taylor**

THEY SAY

"*Naughty Bear* is sure to become a guilty indulgence as players take on the role of a wolf in sheep's clothing"

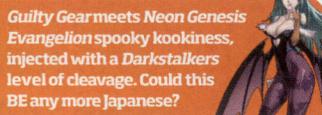
WE SAY

Naughty? More like evil. Has the paradox of a cute exterior with rotten guts punted by games such as *Conker's Bad Fur Day*, but given more cohesion.

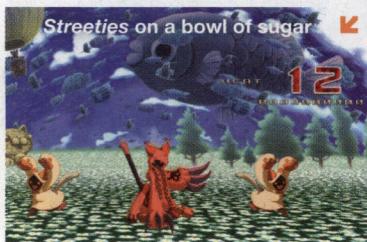
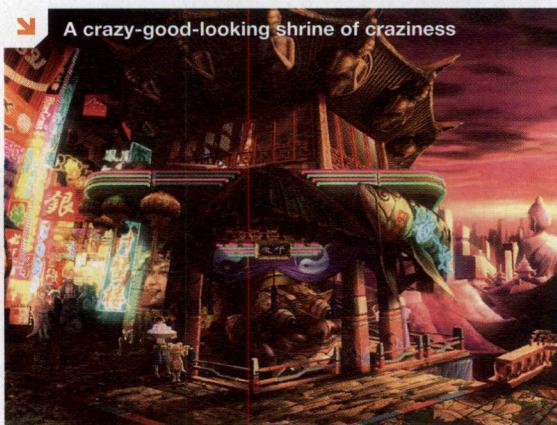
Bad shape	Needs work	Got potential	Looking good	Guaranteed
			X	



THE PITCH



Guilty Gear meets Neon Genesis Evangelion spooky kookiness, injected with a *Darkstalkers* level of cleavage. Could this BE any more Japanese?



PS3 | GENRE: FIGHTING | EXPECTED RELEASE: MARCH 18 | DISTRIBUTOR: AIE | DEVELOPER: ARC SYSTEM WORKS | PLAYERS: 1-2

BLAZBLUE

It may cure your fighting blue balz



STICK TO IT

The Australian version of *BlazBlue* also comes with a mini arcade stick for free in the first few thousand copies of the game that go on sale. The base of the stick is a touch smaller than half the size of this page and it feels pretty solid. Since it plugs in via USB, it works on other games as well. It's definitely something that will sway pre-orders before the game drops in March.

At time of writing, *BlazBlue* hadn't been classified by the OFLC. That's not to say it's in any danger of being refused due to, say, dismemberment of space marines, but it'll be interesting to see just what the OFLC say is in this game. We reckon it'll have mature themes, violence, and lashings of boobs. One of the characters is even referred to in-game as – and we're not making this up – 'boobie lady'.

It's more than just gratuitous chest action. *BlazBlue* is one of the prettiest fighting games you'll ever see. No surprise, really, as it's made by the same mob who crafted *Guilty Gear*, a fighter with a strong cult following. Backgrounds are 3D, brimming with detail and animation, while the fighters themselves are 2D sprites. Watching them scrap is like watching a lush anime in action, their animations filled with frames to make the fighting smooth.

One stage that stood out was the cemetery, where we fought on a bed of roses. Pumpkins on poles lined the fence, and a spooky house in the background loomed ominously. It was stunning to be a part of, while the action on screen was a dazzling light show.

Even the intro to the story is produced to anime standards. Full voice-acting makes

cutscenes more than just a hindrance to the next showdown, though the plot's fairly indepth so you'll probably spend more time watching than playing. Each of the 12 fighters are folded in to the plot and meet up, with the option to play another story stream as you progress.

The characters themselves are fairly diverse, most of them using a weapon as part of their arsenal, whether it's a melee or ranged implement. Although it's lacking the numbers of *SFIV* and *Tekken*, the fighters in *BlazBlue* are diverse. Boobie lady (a.k.a Litchi) has a massive staff that she flicks around and can even balance on, while another guy, Bang Shishigami, throws out darts and a parasol that rains shurikens.

The combat system is kept fairly basic, utilising a light, medium and heavy and 'Drive' attack, as well as the usual super attacks called 'distortion drives'. After that, it's mostly quarter circles and dragon punch with one or more of the attack buttons mapped to it for specials. Toss in double jumps, dash and air dashes, and you have manoeuvres that lend themselves to making a fast and visually frenetic game.

Although we managed a few three-hot combos, the most comprehensive attacks were linking together special attacks in a

brutal trio. Getting there is a test of your quarter circle precision, though your special attacks can be mapped to your shoulder buttons for easy access. Whether this is cheating or not depends on how well you can smash these out. **Paul Taylor**

THEY SAY

"*BlazBlue* has been hailed as the game that every self-respecting console fighting fan should play"

WE SAY

"It's coming out before *Super Street Fighter IV*, but it's different enough to still make it onto gamers' shelves when the updated title launches, thanks to radical art design."

Bad shape	Needs work	Got potential	Looking good	Sure-thing	Guaranteed
					X

BATTLEFIELD BAD COMPANY™ 2

Prepare to go to war
- and smash it to bits.

Bad Company 2 is a game of variety. As you fight across snowy mountain tops, dense jungles and dusty villages, you'll get your hands on an army-load of vehicles that take to the skies, sea and land as the 'B' team hunt a weapon in South America. Expect to go loco in a Black Hawk helicopter, patrol boats and imposing T-90 tanks.

What sets *Bad Company* 2 apart from other shooters is that the environment comes apart dynamically, and the level of destruction possible has increased since the first game. Can't find a doorway to get through a building? Make one. Drive through, perforate your way inside or just blow it up entirely using the 46 weapons at your disposal and watch the walls come tumbling down. Customise your weaponry to make it your own, to represent your playing style, or just for the bling-factor.

As well as having a campaign packed with irreverent humour, multiplayer will be well supported with more customisable weapons and dedicated servers to make the action nice and fast. Whether you're in it for the story or the hectic online action, *Bad Company* 2 promises to tear a hole in the shooter scene a new hole.



www.battlefield.com

INCOMING

Prince of Persia: The Forgotten Sands



It wouldn't be a Prince game without some intensive leaps of faith and brutal looking spikes. Each of the camera angles in these shots is dynamic rather than a fixed shot, so we're hoping for a visually fluid experience.

PS3 | GENRE: ADVENTURE | EXPECTED RELEASE: MAY 11 2010 | DISTRIBUTOR: UBISOFT | DEVELOPER: UBISOFT MONTREAL | PLAYERS: 1

PRINCE OF PERSIA: THE FORGOTTEN SANDS

Sand: it gets everywhere



THE PITCH

A Ubisoft melting pot. Assassin's Creed meets The Sands of Time. And Jake Gyllenhaal's movie version of Prince.



The new old-Prince looks like a man with purpose now, instead of a jackass with a headband. More regal with armour that doesn't look like it'd hang on the walls of an S&M club, he's also yet to get his ink on his arms – perhaps this is the adventure that we'll see him get his tats. The distinguishing red sash remains; he just couldn't wall run without it.

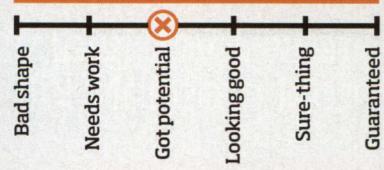


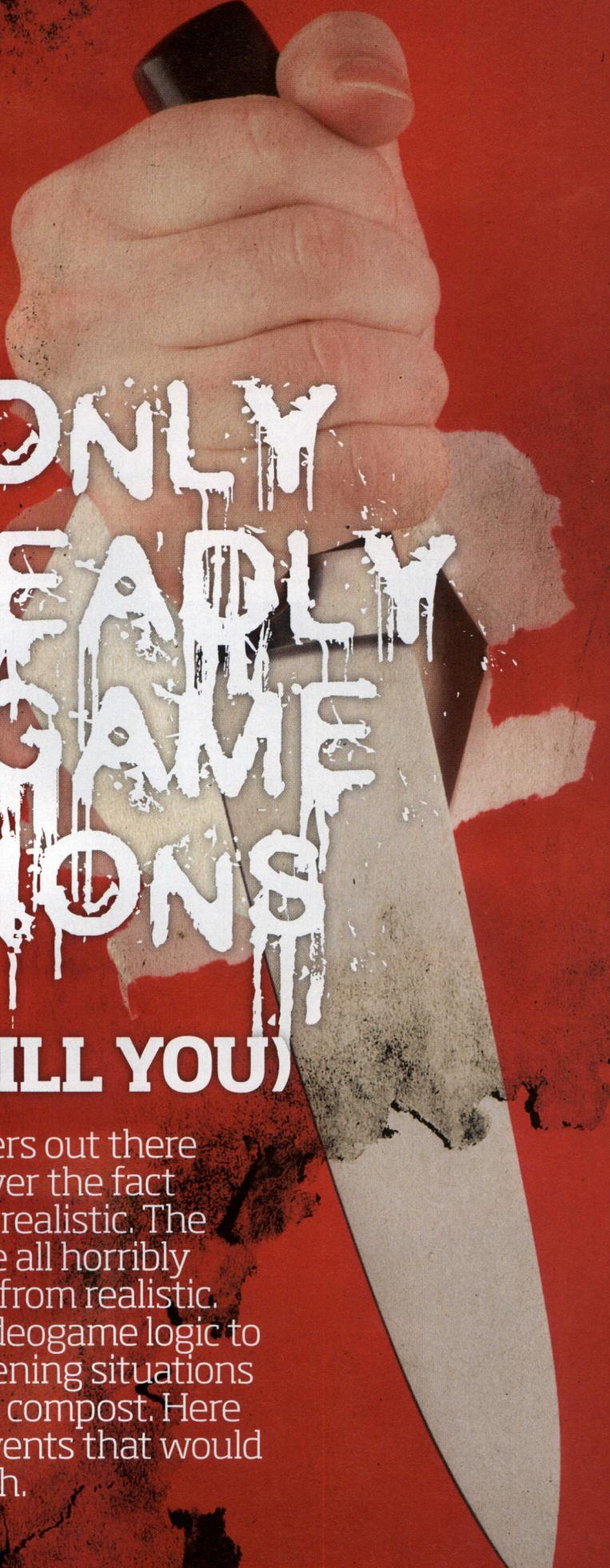
THEY SAY

"Will feature many of the fan-favourite elements from the original series as well as new gameplay innovations"

WE SAY

This 'interquel' set between *The Sands of Time* and *Warrior Within* looks like the game fans wanted. If the latest Prince was New Coke, this is Old Coke.



A large, weathered hand wearing a dark glove holds a long, serrated knife diagonally across the page. The background is a solid red color.

SEVEN COMMONLY NON-BEARDLY VIDEOGAME SITUATIONS (THAT WILL KILL YOU)

There's a veritable sea of gamers out there with their panties in a twist over the fact videogames are becoming too realistic. The good news, for them, is they're all horribly mistaken. Videogames are far from realistic. In fact, if you were to apply videogame logic to any number of real life-threatening situations you would almost certainly be compost. Here are seven trivial videogame events that would most probably kill you. To death.

FALLING

AS SEEN IN:

Assassin's Creed and most everything else with a jump button.

IN VIDEOGAMES:

Landing from a great height is easy, if videogames are anything to gauge by. Videogame characters can shrug off huge falls with nary so much as a sprained ankle. Stepping off high ledges, dropping from multistorey buildings – it's all mostly non-fatal.

Even higher falls can be survived if you fall into water (or you're Spider-Man). After Rockstar took the parachutes out of *GTA IV* the only safe way to leave a helicopter was to hurl yourself out over water. Skyscraper-scale falls are completely unproblematic as long as you land in the ocean, or a pool.

Try jumping from the top of the Eiffel Tower in *The Saboteur*. As long as you bellyflop into the shallow, kidney-shaped pool below it you'll be fine.

THE PROBLEM:

That's not how it works.

Objects, like a piano (or a human), will fall 9.81 metres per second per second. That's an acceleration of 9.81 m/s^2 . With air resistance, the object will eventually reach a terminal velocity, around 56 metres per second for a human body. That's about 200km/h. It only takes

three seconds to reach 50 per cent of terminal velocity. Fall for three seconds and you'll be hitting the ground at 100km/h. Imagine being hit by a bus doing 100km/h. That's how fast you'll be hitting the ground.

Falls from six metres are a clinically important risk, above which major trauma is a distinct probability. Survival is pretty rare from falls above 12 metres, at least in urban environments.

So swan diving into a pile of hay from the top of a medieval church, a la *Assassin's Creed*, is a terrible idea. The massive trauma the body endures as a result of severe vertical deceleration will turn your insides into offal. Dropping in on a giant dam riding a skateboard is also a terrible idea.

Leaping into water is also not recommended. Don't believe what you see in videogames. Landing in water at terminal velocity, due to surface tension, is virtually just as bad as landing on concrete. You'll still be turned into a sausage man. Some pundits suggest you can survive a high-speed water landing by landing vertical (feet-first), legs crossed at the ankles (so the rushing water doesn't strip away your balls) with your head back (so you don't tear your nose off) and your sphincter clenched (to avoid the severe internal damage you'd expect from a 200km/h+ jet of water up the cornhole). We have our doubts.

BEING SHOT

AS SEEN IN:

Max Payne, *Far Cry 2*, every game with guns in it ever.

IN VIDEOGAMES:

Like in Hollywood, being shot in a videogame generally ain't no thing. If the past few years of shooters have taught us anything a little blood will splash in your eyes, regardless of where you've been shot, and your heart will send whatever blood it didn't just upchuck onto your face directly to your ears. Sitting down for a spell, however, will see the blood on your eyeballs slowly vanish and the dull thud of your adrenaline-charged ticker fade away.

Okay, but videogame heroes are just like their film counterparts, right? They're taking bullets in all those expendable areas of the human body – the ones that aren't really affected by bullets. You know, the shoulder, or the thigh and stuff. Everyone knows grimacing and sucking in some air is more than sufficient to negate the effects of a bullet lodged inside one of these areas. Anyone who says otherwise is a little girl.

THE PROBLEM:

Unfortunately, particularly for those who aren't done killing or are still some time away from derailing an especially cunning terrorist plot, elaborate heist or historically inaccurate Nazi counterattack, being shot is kind of a big deal. You can't really write a bullet off as just a scratch simply because it didn't hit you in the head or a crucial part of your torso.

As a rule, all gunshot wounds are considered medical

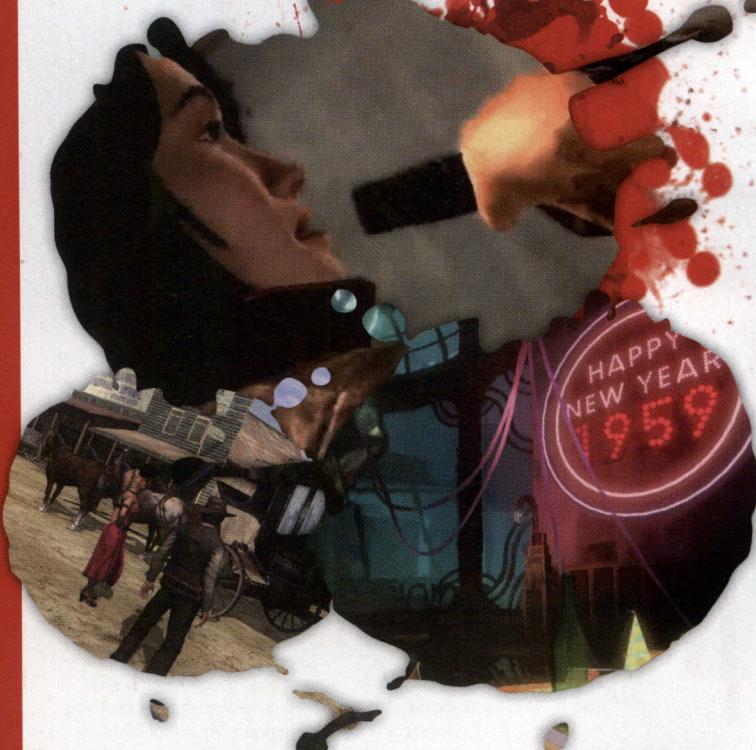
emergencies that require immediate hospital treatment. There aren't really many empty places inside the human body so, chances are, being shot will severely disrupt something you need. Your shoulders, for instance, aren't far away from your lungs, and these are required for breathing. Even if the bullet misses your lungs there's a better than average chance you'll suffer serious vascular damage, ongoing pain and partial to complete loss of mobility. The thigh is no better. You may think you can keep on limping, but the human circulatory system has a lot of important shit going down in that area. Get tagged in the femoral artery, for instance, and blood loss should put the kybosh on your whole weekend. Without treatment, death by exsanguination could follow. Exsanguination is more commonly known as 'bleeding out'. It should be avoided.

Treatment, it should be noted, should be done by trained professional in a surgical environment. Digging a bullet out of your arm with a combat knife looks manly, but it's absolutely not recommended. Bullets are not toxic, so unless they've been manhandled by a Poison Dart Frog you're not going to suddenly keel over. In fact, the intense heat generated in a bullet by firing it renders it pretty sterile – far more sterile than that knife you've been using to gut zebras.

Painkillers aren't going to help either. If they did you could do away with emergency wards altogether, and just have one guy in a coat doling out Panadol from a sack.



ALCOHOL POISONING



AS SEEN IN:

WET, GUN, BioShock.

IN VIDEOGAMES:

The booze buff is not common in videogames, but it's certainly out there. In *WET*, taking a large swig from a bottle of whiskey fully restores Rubi's health. In the open-world Western *GUN*, titular cowpoke Colton White chugs litres of whiskey to negate the effects of bullets lodged in his flesh. In *BioShock*, you can drink any grog you find lying around to restore health. Actually, in *BioShock* alcohol increases health but lowers EVE. However, cigarettes increase EVE and lower health – and because they give you more than they take away, doing both in equal amounts is *good for you*.

But we digress.

The key thing to note is that videogames make drinking good for you, and you can never drink too much of it.

THE PROBLEM:

Yes, you can.

One 700ml of whiskey is probably just shy of 24 standard drinks. Let's say you're no more than an average weight bloke – around 85 kilograms, or less. 12 drinks in one hour will render

you absolutely trolleyed. Your speech will be heavily slurred, your motor skills will be positively rooted and that Double Bacon Cheeseburger you inhaled earlier will now be an embarrassing puree on your shirt. Your blood alcohol concentration at this stage will be about 250mg/dL. That's milligrams per decilitre. Double it to 24 standard drinks in one hour and you're looking at 500mg/dL – or 0.50 per cent concentration. That's 10 times the legal driving limit in Australia. The last thing you'd remember after waking up in a cell in no pants would be the fuzz burning your driver's license and cubing your car. That is, if you weren't dead.

You see, the lethal dose of alcohol – what's considered to likely kill 50 per cent of those affected (LD50) – is 400mg/dL (about 0.40 per cent concentration). If you quaffed a few hip flasks worth of whiskey in the space of a short horse ride, like *GUN*'s Colton White, you'd be lucky to survive. One minute you'd be draped over a karaoke machine singing 'US Forces' and texting that cute co-worker you've got a massive crush on, and the next you'd be deader than 4AM.

NOT EATING

AS SEEN IN: Most videogames ever made, except *GTA: San Andreas*. Kind of.

IN VIDEOGAMES:

How many videogames actually require you to eat? Not that many. Sure, there are countless games that use food as health – but if your health is maxed-out you don't need to eat it. You can suck down roadside hot dogs and Cluckin' Bell all day in *GTAIV* if you wanted – but what if you don't? What if you decide to go a whole week without a scrap of tucker? Nothing. Niko remains the same medium-built male he was seven days ago – he doesn't become some emaciated skeleton.

We've never seen Soap or Price take a time-out for chow. As far as we know they're busy saving the world on empty stomachs. We've been playing *The Saboteur* recently – Sean Devlin subsists entirely on cigarettes. Not a sandwich to be seen.

Nobody's eating anything really. At all.

Food. Who needs it?

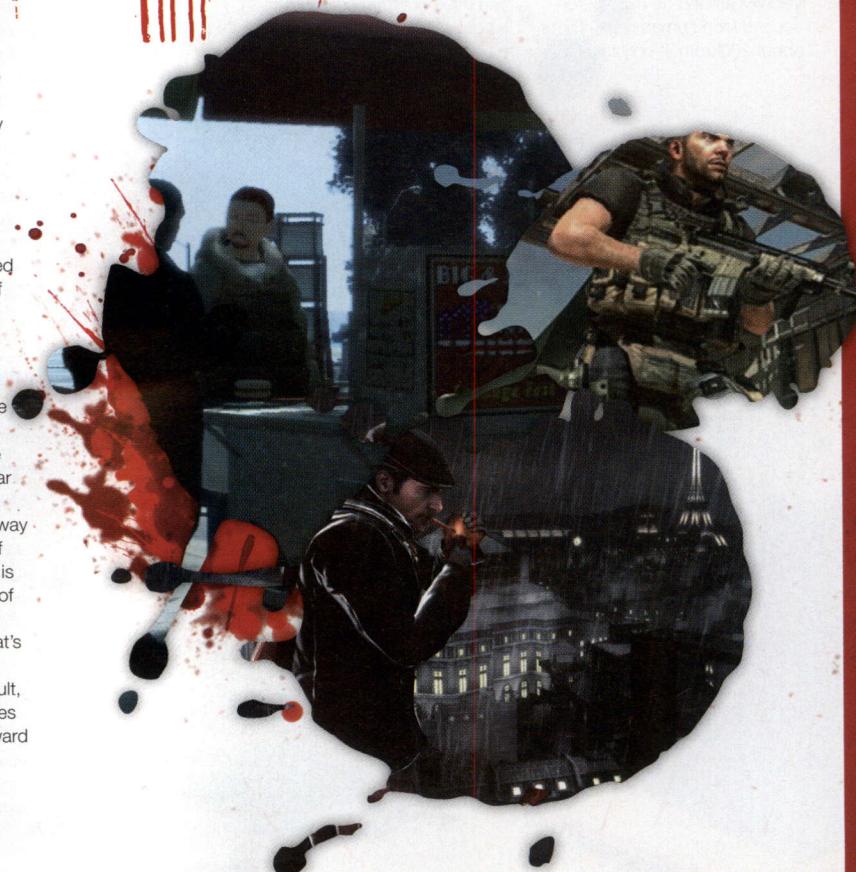
THE PROBLEM:

Who needs food? Everyone. You don't eat when you're injured. You eat when you're hungry. If you don't, eventually you'll cark it.

Persons experiencing starvation will lose significant fat and muscle mass as the body breaks down these tissues for energy. This is called catabolism; it's the process of a body breaking down parts of itself in order to keep more vital systems like the nervous system and heart functioning. Like when you're sitting on the lounge and take the batteries out of one less-crucial remote to keep another going. Only far more awful.

The stomach will waste away and weaken the perception of hunger, since that perception is controlled by the percentage of your belly that is empty. You'll also become dehydrated. That's bad too.

Vitamin deficiency will result, leading to a vast array of issues that range from socially awkward (diarrhoea) to exceedingly problematic (death).



BURNING

AS SEEN IN: *GTA IV, The Saboteur, and so on.*

IN VIDEOGAMES:

Being set ablaze in videogames is generally a bit of a pain in the arse, because you invariably know when the flames die out you're going to be left with a sliver of health. At this stage you're going to need to hide behind a box for a few seconds while you recover, or grab a hot dog.

Other than that, fire is little more than a moderate inconvenience.

THE PROBLEM:

Burns to over 15 per cent of the body for adults are potentially

life-threatening injuries (because of the risk of hypovolaemic shock) and should have formal fluid resuscitation and monitoring in a burns unit. Being sprayed by a flamethrower in a busy intersection and having your whole body on fire will likely result in burns to a large percentage of your body. Even if this doesn't kill you (which it will) you're not going to carjacking your way out of the area.

Also, if and when you're on fire – it's not just going to stop if you're patient enough and wait it out long enough. Stop, drop and roll.

CAR CRASHES

AS SEEN IN:

Gran Turismo, GTA, anything with cars in it.

IN VIDEOGAMES:

Cars and videogames: it's one of this industry's most enduring matches. We've been racing them, crashing them and using them to get around in videogames for decades. The digital world of autos, however, is an extremely safe one. High-speed collisions rarely leave your car completely undrivable, and they almost never result in death.

THE PROBLEM:

High-speed car accidents are extraordinarily good at killing people. Even if you're not

impaled by a chunk of flying debris (or your knees being driven into your own chest, the sheer amount of force and energy involved in bringing a 1500 or so kilogram lump of metal and bucket seats from 100km/h+ (for instance) to zero in the space of 0.2 seconds (for instance) is more than capable of killing a person.

Bailing out, or being ejected, is no help either. Estimates indicate that more than 75 per cent of people who are ejected from cars during crashes die in the process. Think about that next time Niko is blasted, screaming, through a windscreens only to dust himself off and grab a hot dog.

SUPERSONIC EJECTION

AS SEEN IN:

Just Cause, GTA: San Andreas and, um, Just Cause 2 (probably).

IN VIDEOGAMES:

Leaping out of planes is *nothing*. Rico Rodriguez from *Just Cause* does it constantly. Hell, he spends most of his time in the air hitching a ride simply by *grabbing a plane and holding on*. He does this in nothing but tight jeans and a loose shirt because it's no big deal. What sort of nancy can't handle a little wind?

THE PROBLEM:

Define a little wind. The windblast from jumping from a plane close to or above speed of sound is immense. So immense it'll most probably kill you (especially if, instead of a flight suit you're sporting nothing

but some casual clobber and lightly-tussled hair). Take Brian Udell, for instance – the only man ever to survive ejecting at sea level from a jet going faster than Mach 1. This would have resulted in a load of 45 g – which would be like being temporarily crushed by a minibus, or about 40 Kirstie Alleys. His gloves and watch were torn away, his helmet and mask were RIPPED OFF HIS HEAD, and every blood vessel in his face exploded. Oh, and the force of wind also broke both his legs at the calves (blasting them beneath his seat) and dislocated both his arms (one relocated before he hit the ocean). He pulled himself into his life raft wearing a shredded life-vest and only one out of four limbs working.

Can you see the problem here? Because we can. ■



BLAZ OF GLORY

Thanks to All Interactive Entertainment we've got 10 signed copies of *BlazBlue* to giveaway. Each features to nifty little arcade stick that'll be available with the game in stores. For a chance to win, simply answer the following question and follow the entry instructions on page 26!

Question: If you could create a *BlazBlue* character, who would they be and what would they look like?



OPS CHATS TO ARC SYSTEM WORKS' CARLO CHERICONI, PRODUCER OF BLAZBLUE

OPS: *BlazBlue*, and the previous *Guilty Gear* series, are obviously made with a great deal of passion. When did you start to play fighting games and which one influenced your work?

CC: I used to be a regular at game centres playing arcade games. I was a student back then, mainly playing all available 2D fighting games you ever heard before like *Street Fighter*, *Vampire* and *King of Fighters*. If I had to choose one then I would say I was most addicted to *Vampire* (it's called *Night Warriors: Darkstalkers' Revenge* outside Japan).

That game gave me a big impact of its graphics and game system. I was always playing the game thinking, 'This should be like this... and that should be...' to make it my own in my mind.

BlazBlue isn't just another fighting game. I wanted to create an 'entertainment' so I've watched a large number of Hollywood action movies for research as well. My ultimate goal was always to let people have fun.

OPS: 2D HD looks great. Why don't other developers use it more?

CC: Creating HD 2D animation graphics take a huge amount of time and effort. Creators' passion must reflect on the final results big time. All of us at Arc System Works staff love anime and our passion is to create something superior than anime. I don't think there is nobody like us in other game developers with this kind of passion. Let's just say Arc System Works just happens to have many people with the same passion.

OPS: *Street Fighter IV* showed that 3D graphics could keep the same charm as 2D. Have you ever considered dropping sprite animation in favour of 3D?

CC: To be honest, the answer is yes. I think *Street Fighter IV* and *Okami* are great games and there are so many other great games with 3D anime-style graphics. They are all well made but my ideal creations of '2D animation' are not there, we prefer expressive and passionate styles of drawing. We have actually used a lot of 3D models in *BlazBlue* game creation process. The base of character animations in the game are all in 3D. We have then added hand drawn 2D graphics on top to create sprite animations. We might start using 3D when the technology becomes available for us to create the same expressive drawing style.

OPS: Which character from other fighting game would you like to enroll in the cast of *BlazBlue*?

CC: This is a very difficult question to answer. If it's okay then I would choose SOL=BADGUY from our very own *Guilty Gear* series, Donovan & Huitzil from *Vampire*, Akuma from *Street Fighter*, and Bayonetta if I'm allowed to pick one from action game.

BlazBlue will be available in stores March 18.

50 TOP MOST MEMORABLE VIDEOGAME CHARACTERS OF ALL TIME!

The virtual world, much like the regular world, is a stage and each of us play a part. But whereas the regular world is firmly based in stinky, unalterable reality, the virtual one is based in pure awesomeness. In a general sense, it means we can all escape our own predetermined 'parts' in our own existence -especially the shitty scenes that consist of us going to school like a shlub, flipping burgers like a boob, and generally not saving the world. While in the process of avoiding loved ones/idiots/society in general, the virtual world has let us slip into the shoes of some truly memorable characters over the years. Here, for your edification, is a collection of our favourite alter egos.



IN DEPTH

Top 50 Characters

50 ALUCARD

AS SEEN IN:
CASTLEVANIA SYMPHONY
OF THE NIGHT

Featuring much depth and complexity due to his status as Dracula's son, Alucard is one of the greatest anti-heroes to ever star in a videogame. Take note, tween demographic: this is a vampire story done right. You're a half-vampire helping vampire hunters slay your evil father – not a romantic vampire with sissy skin that glitters in the sunlight.



49 JOHN MARSTON

AS SEEN IN:
RED DEAD REDEMPTION

You're just going to need to take our word for this one. Our recent hands-on has confirmed that this gunslinger is as cool as he looks, which is about as cool as the other side of Samuel L. Jackson's pillow. Maybe it's the six-shooters, maybe it's the fanny duster – whatever it is, it's working.



47 ALBERT WESKER

AS SEEN IN:
RESIDENT EVIL SERIES

Wesker is the recurring Resident Evil baddie who refuses to cash in his chips. Sure, Resident Evil 5's producer, confirmed that he did indeed 'perish' in that game's finale – but we could have sworn he dodged that final rocket. Mind you, he dodged into lava. Hmm. Whatever the case, he was a worthy, charismatic foe.



48 ALEX MERCER

AS SEEN IN: PROTOTYPE

A man with one purpose: revenge. He came on the wave of anti-heroes, physically capable – though mentally wonky – of literally tearing an army in half searching for the person who made him what he is. Mercer's one hood whose beer you don't want to spill.

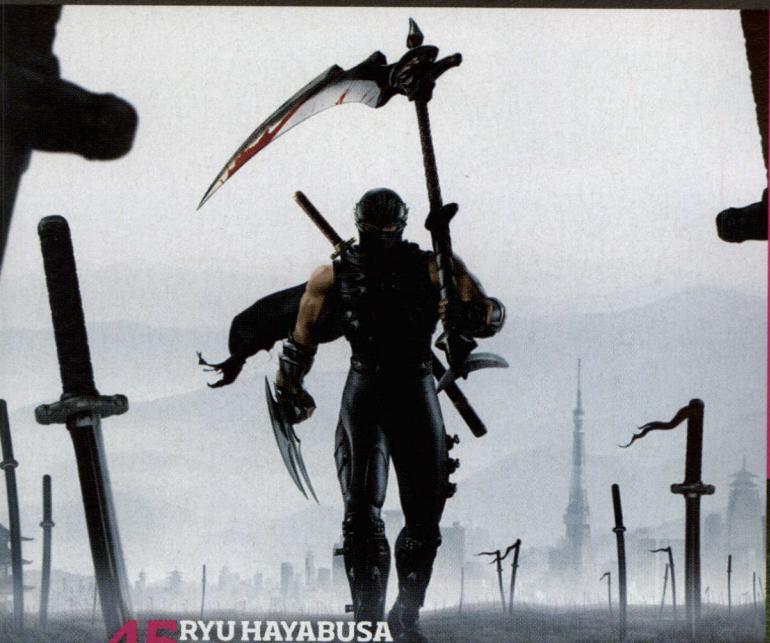


46 SIR DANIEL FORTESQUE

AS SEEN IN: MEDIEVIL SERIES

The charming thing about Sir Dan is that, in life, he wasn't a particularly good warrior. He was slain in the opening seconds of his very first battle. In death, however, he discovers the chance to redeem his rep. The message? It's never too late to try and make something of yourself. Oh, and he can remove his own arm and use it as a club.



**45 RYU HAYABUSA**

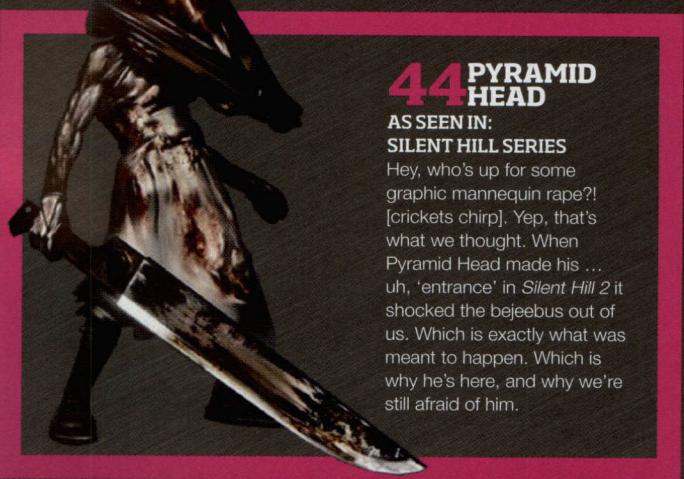
AS SEEN IN: NINJA GAIDEN SERIES, DEAD OR ALIVE SERIES

One of gaming's greatest warriors, Hayabusa has decimated more demons than you've had bowls of cereal. The man speaks little, and makes Persian princes look like pansies when relying on time-altering daggers. Though he slices through chumps at a lightning rate, Ryu does it with more cool than an Antarctic ice shelf.

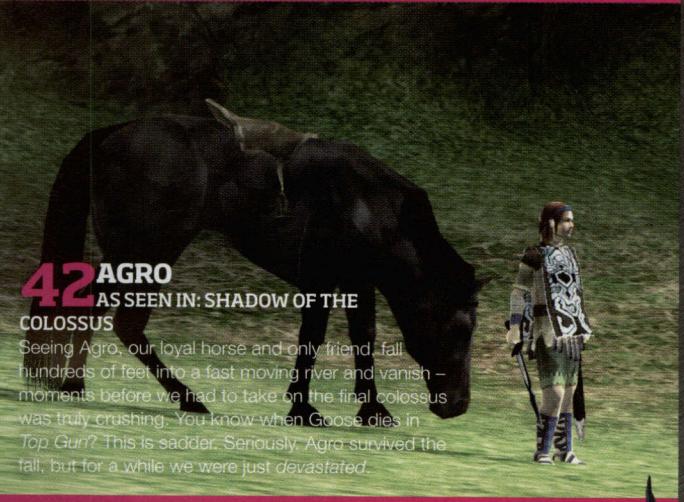
**43 JACQUES BLANC**

AS SEEN IN: ONIMUSA 3: DEMON SIEGE

A French motorcycle-riding cop who gets transported to feudal Japan to find a batshit crazy army, Jacques' story is badass. Oh, and he's also played by Jean Reno. The same Jean Reno in *The Professional*, *Ronin* and even *Godzilla*. He's also the only Frenchman who cleft a demon in two, and then set it on fire.

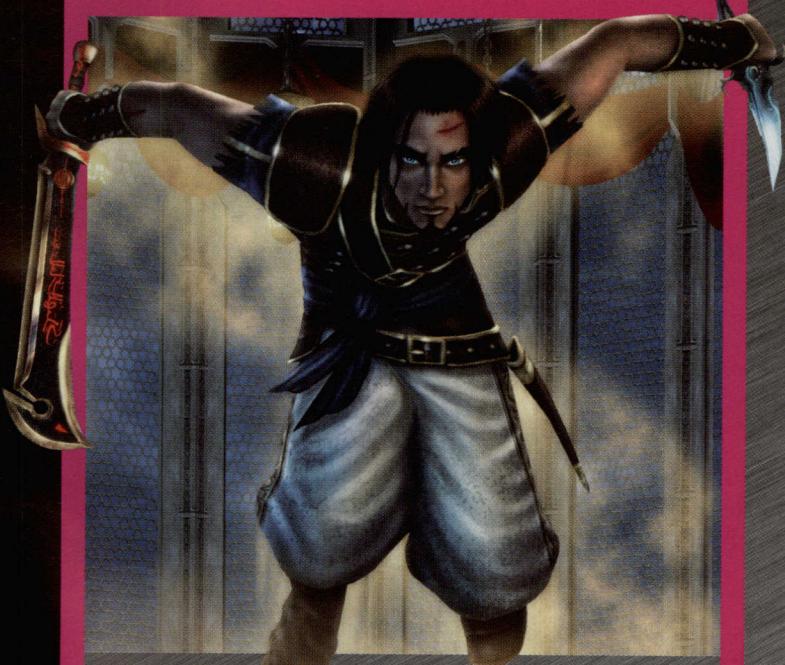
**44 PYRAMID HEAD**AS SEEN IN:
SILENT HILL SERIES

Hey, who's up for some graphic mannequin rape?! [crickets chirp]. Yep, that's what we thought. When Pyramid Head made his ... uh, 'entrance' in *Silent Hill 2* it shocked the bejeebus out of us. Which is exactly what was meant to happen. Which is why he's here, and why we're still afraid of him.

**42 AGRO**

AS SEEN IN: SHADOW OF THE COLOSSUS

Seeing Agro, our loyal horse and only friend, fall hundreds of feet into a fast moving river and vanish – moments before we had to take on the final colossus was truly crushing. You know when Goose dies in *Top Gun*? This is sadder. Seriously. Agro survived the fall, but for a while we were just devastated.

**41 PRINCE OF PERSIA**

AS SEEN IN: PRINCE OF PERSIA SERIES

Now here's a character that has seen more reinventions than Madonna. While his name is never explicitly stated, and his personality and appearance have varied over time, the Prince is never without his trademark athletic and acrobatic skills. Whatever incarnation you may think is the best, there's little doubt that The Prince's parkour antics had a major hand in the way we platform today.

IN DEPTH

Top 50 Characters



40 KURT HECTIC AS SEEN IN: MDK SERIES

You couldn't miss this bloke, since his helmet is nearly the size of his torso. A sharp-shooter with a skin-tight black suit with ribbons that function as a parachute, Kurt's day job as janitor is ditched to stave off aliens. Stunningly athletic and likeable, we're surprised Kurt's spent nearly a decade out of the limelight.



38 ELENA FISHER AS SEEN IN: UNCHARTED SERIES, OUR DREAMS

Elena makes the list because we're still smitten with her. In a landscape where women are normally defined by the size of their chests rather than the depth of their personalities, Elena stands out. She's basically just a Bond girl with a little more brains and sass, but that's enough for us.

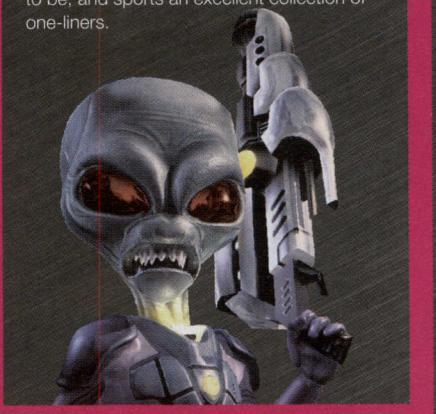


37 DANTE AS SEEN IN: DEVIL MAY CRY SERIES

Dividing audiences between the camps of love and hate, it's impossible to deny that Dante doesn't have some incredible moves. One of our favourites is a cut-scene where Dante takes down a room of demons using a pool table and balls whilst eating a slice of pizza. Plus he packs some serious hand cannons.

36 CRYPTO-SPORIDIUM AS SEEN IN: DESTROY ALL HUMANS! SERIES

An alien with a heart of gold. Actually, that's a lie. He's a mass murdering biped whose shape-shifting ability and telekinesis also fuel the fear of communists taking over 1950s America. However, he's a probe-load of fun to be, and sports an excellent collection of one-liners.



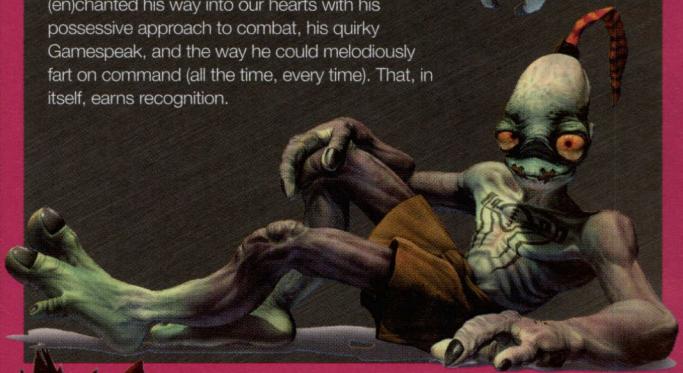
39 KAZUMA KIRYU AS SEEN IN: YAKUZA SERIES

Fresh out of prison after taking the heat for his best mate, Kazuma is one of the most sharply-dressed ex-crimps PlayStation's ever seen. Sporting a distinctive dragon tattoo that entirely covers his back, this ruthless suit-wearing Yakuza is deft at stomping on faces. Surprisingly, he's also a ladies man.



35 ABEAS SEEN IN: ABE'S ODDYSEE,
ABE'S EXODDUS

An anorexic weakling in a loin cloth. Such an unlikely hero, such a loveable scamp. Abe (en)chanted his way into our hearts with his possessive approach to combat, his quirky Gamespeak, and the way he could melodiously fart on command (all the time, every time). That, in itself, earns recognition.

**32 THE BOSS**AS SEEN IN:
METAL GEAR SOLID 3:
SNAKE EATER

Want to know why she is known as 'the mum of U.S. Special Forces'? Well, in June 1944, during World War II, The Boss led her Cobra unit to victory at the Battle of Normandy. She was pregnant at the time and even gave birth to a baby boy on the battlefield (via a messy caesarian section). Legendary status: confirmed. Enough said.

**33 TOMMY VERCETTI**

AS SEEN IN: GTA: VICE CITY

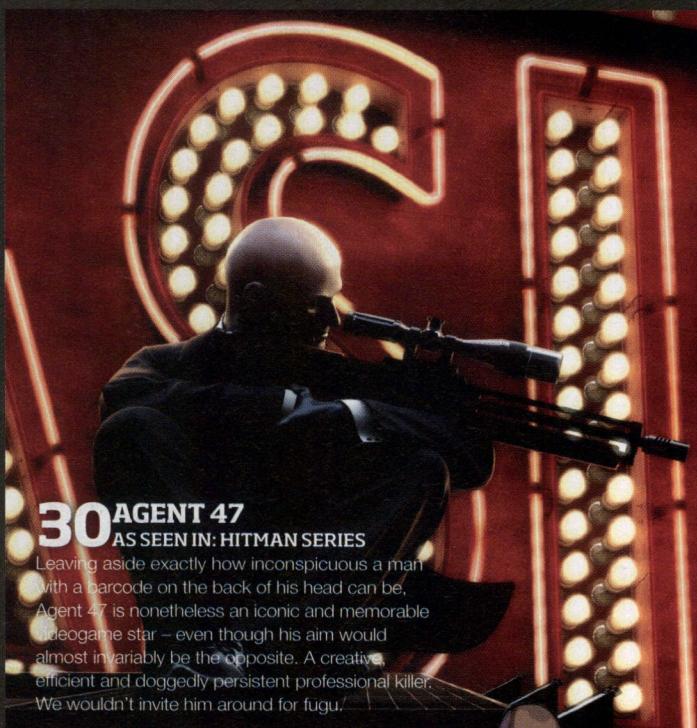
Before Niko, there was Tommy and the neon nuthouse that was the '80s. Sporting a past that would make Mr. Blonde from *Reservoir Dogs* look like a girl scout, Tommy Vercetti is let loose on Vice City and ends up ruling it like Tony Montana. He also kills more people in the storyline than any other GTA character on record. Impressive.

**31 SIEGFRIED SCHTAUFFEN**AS SEEN IN: SOUL BLADE,
SOULCALIBUR SERIES

He seems like a vacuous pretty boy; but trust us, Siggy has been through some shit since *Soul Blade*. Accidentally beheading his own dad led him to become Nightmare, though he did eventually manage to escape Soul Edge's thrall. Come *Soulcalibur IV*, Siegfried is proof that any person may redeem themselves (given enough sequels).

**34 CRASH BANDICOOT**AS SEEN IN: CRASH BANDICOOT
SERIES, CRASH TEAM RACING

Now here's a cautionary tale. For a while there Crash was the poster marsupial of the mighty PlayStation empire. Then Naughty Dog dumped his arse, and he had to pimp himself out to any platform that would have him. We definitely like your old stuff better than your new stuff, Crash.



30 AGENT 47

AS SEEN IN: HITMAN SERIES

Leaving aside exactly how inconspicuous a man with a barcode on the back of his head can be, Agent 47 is nonetheless an iconic and memorable video game star – even though his aim would almost invariably be the opposite. A creative, efficient and doggedly persistent professional killer. We wouldn't invite him around for fugu.



27 SEAN DEVLIN

AS SEEN IN: THE SABOTEUR

Opinion suggests Devlin is an unlikeable lout, but we love him – despite his shonky accent. We're fascinated by his absolutely unbridled hatred of anything German, and we're big fans of his vocabulary. He's like a walking profanisaurus, with a new curse word for every occasion. He also lives in a strip club change room. Well done.



29 OFFICER FRANK TENPENNY

AS SEEN IN:
GTA: SAN ANDREAS

One of the best scumbags to grace a console, Tenpenny was a murderous megalomaniac – a crooked cop of the highest order. Killing fellow officers, extorting criminals – nothing was off limits for this dangerous piece of work. The fact that he was expertly-voiced by Samuel L. Jackson only made him all the more menacing...

28 PAUL PHOENIX

AS SEEN IN: TEKKEN SERIES

The man with, quite likely, the single most improbable bouffant in the history of hair management is one of Tekken's most enduring characters. It could be because he has a variety of cheap attacks cheap players can exploit to score cheap wins over uninitiated mates, but it's probably just the haircut.



26 ANDREW RYAN

AS SEEN IN:
BIOSHOCK SERIES

We're not recognising Mr. Ryan for the unorthodox way he met his maker, or even for building a freakin' metropolis under the sea. They're all valid reasons, but we're more inclined to honour him for being a part of 'The League of Extraordinary Moustaches' (other notable members include Heihachi Mishima and Mike Haggar)



25 MAX PAYNE MAX PAYNE SERIES

In the original game Max's only face texture made him look like he had a carrot stashed up his date. Fortunately, he managed to evolve beyond such dubious beginnings to become the ultimate noir cop with an almost god-like (and completely unexplained) mastery of time. Truly a fascinating man who will doubtless prove to become more so.

24 LARA CROFT AS SEEN IN: TOMB RAIDER SERIES

Fact: Lara Croft was the first videogame character to grace the cover of UK style mag, *The Face*. That's like Bayonetta being the cover model for *Cosmo*. We can comfortably say Lara is an intelligent, headstrong character that has gained enough public awareness to become as synonymous with videogames as Sonic and Mario.

23 MASTER CHOP CHOP AS SEEN IN: PARAPPA THE RAPPER SERIES, UM JAMMER LAMMY

Chop's full of important life information, karate lessons and guitar building skills, all delivered in the form of rap. He questions his students' purpose and aptitude, not to tease or be facetious, but to make them focus their strength. Plus, he's a spring onion with an animated fu man chu.



22 GABRIEL LOGAN AS SEEN IN: SYPHON FILTER SERIES

They've neutered it since, but back in the late '90s Gabe Logan had the greatest taser in the world. It was deadly accurate over long distances, and fired for long enough it would set people on fire. Gabe himself has always struck us as kind of a meathead who spoke too fast, but he's always got the job done with style.

21 EZIO AS SEEN IN: ASSASSIN'S CREED II

Ezio Auditore da Firenze beats the hell out of Altair. Standing in stark contrast to his brooding arrogance, Ezio is an Italian stallion who is outwardly vocal and prefers to talk with his hands (which just so happen to be packing two lethal hidden blades). Legend.

20 JADE

AS SEEN IN:
BEYOND GOOD & EVIL

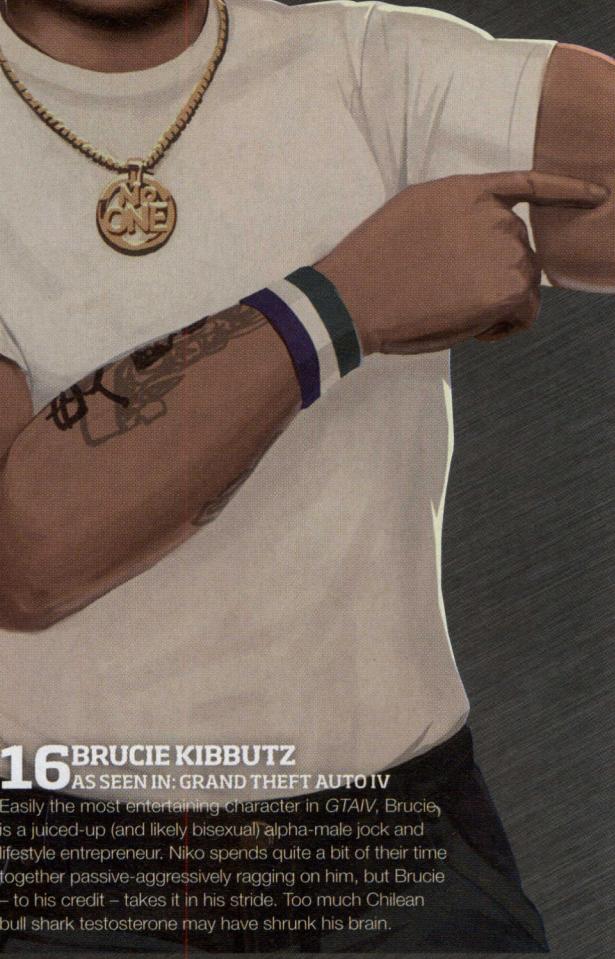
Jade is the rarest of rare gems: a videogame heroine who is inquisitive, intelligent, brave, and fully-clothed. Interestingly, her creators consciously made her racially ambiguous as well, in an effort to allow players to see themselves in the role. Aside from *Half-life 2*'s lovely Alyx, Jade's blueprint really hasn't been reused. A pity, really.



19 CLAPTRAP (CL4P-TP)

AS SEEN IN: BORDERLANDS

The plucky robot that could... hide, be dead, be neurotic. And breakdance. Despite his fear of bandits, bullets affect Claptrap like rom-coms affect Rambo (i.e. they don't) - he's one NPC that's always a source of info and hilarity delivered in a permanent chirpy tone. We're waiting for the Claptrap DLC



18 SEPHIROTH

AS SEEN IN: FINAL FANTASY
SERIES, KINGDOM HEARTS SERIES,
EHRGEIZ

Sephiroth is an utterly misunderstood guy who just wanted to destroy the world by summoning a huge meteor, and to kill your girlfriend with a sword longer than most street signs. Yeah, okay. This guy is about as evil and twisted as a pretzel forged in Hell. He's also one of the best antagonists ever designed.



17 RYU

AS SEEN IN: STREET
FIGHTER SERIES

Some people say Ken. We say Ryu. And when we do say "Ryu" we actually pronounce it correctly, unlike all of our Philistine mates. Ryu is the personification of the perfect pugilist, and it is rumoured that he will only tell his last name to whoever beats him. This is why no one in the universe (including Ken Masters) knows what it is.



16 BRUCIE KIBBUTZ

AS SEEN IN: GRAND THEFT AUTO IV

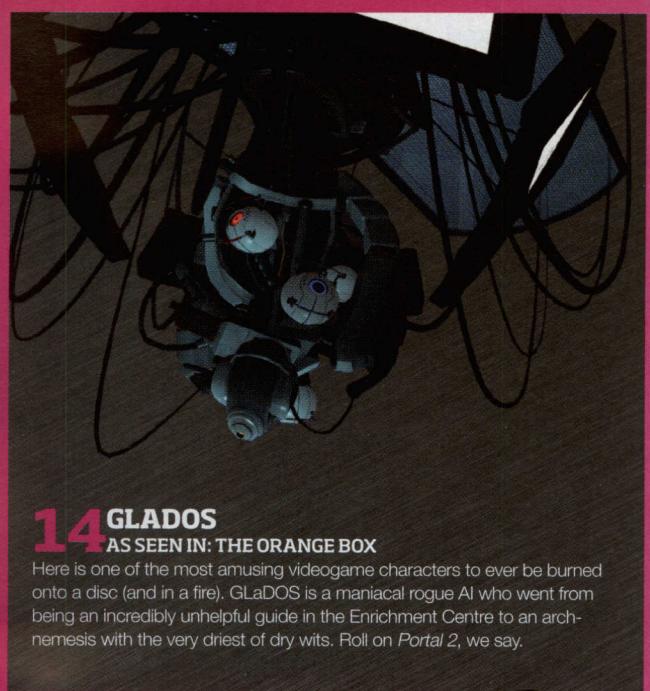
Easily the most entertaining character in GTAIV, Brucie is a juiced-up (and likely bisexual) alpha-male jock and lifestyle entrepreneur. Niko spends quite a bit of their time together passive-aggressively ragging on him, but Brucie – to his credit – takes it in his stride. Too much Chilean bull shark testosterone may have shrunk his brain.



15 CLANK (AND RATCHET)

AS SEEN IN: RATCHET & CLANK SERIES

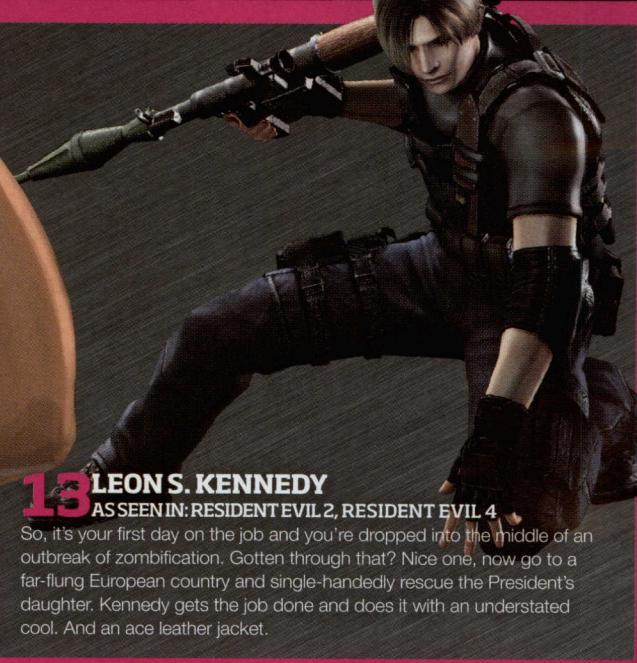
Some folks call Clank "the stereotypical intellectual; stuffy and almost prudish to a fault". We like him better than Ratchet and think the title for the series should be inverted to give him more credit. Also, how can anyone not like his awkward little robot laugh?



14 GLADOS

AS SEEN IN: THE ORANGE BOX

Here is one of the most amusing videogame characters to ever be burned onto a disc (and in a fire). GLaDOS is a maniacal rogue AI who went from being an incredibly unhelpful guide in the Enrichment Centre to an arch-nemesis with the very driest of dry wits. Roll on *Portal 2*, we say.



13 LEON S. KENNEDY

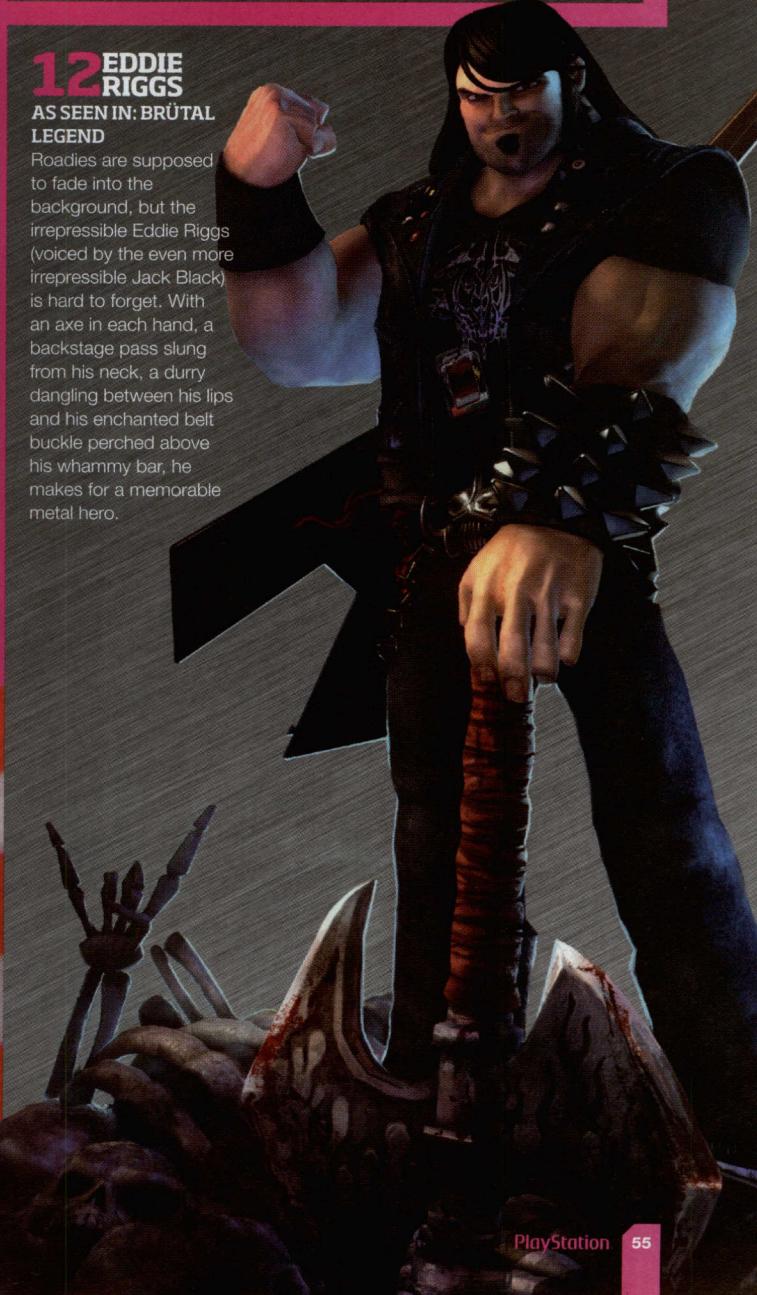
AS SEEN IN: RESIDENT EVIL 2, RESIDENT EVIL 4

So, it's your first day on the job and you're dropped into the middle of an outbreak of zombification. Gotten through that? Nice one, now go to a far-flung European country and single-handedly rescue the President's daughter. Kennedy gets the job done and does it with an understated cool. And an ace leather jacket.

12 EDDIE RIGGS

AS SEEN IN: BRUTAL LEGEND

Roadies are supposed to fade into the background, but the irrepressible Eddie Riggs (voiced by the even more irrepressible Jack Black) is hard to forget. With an axe in each hand, a backstage pass slung from his neck, a durry dangling between his lips and his enchanted belt buckle perched above his whammy bar, he makes for a memorable metal hero.



11 DUKE NUKEM

AS SEEN IN: DUKE NUKEM SERIES

As a hyper-masculine, womanising, abattoir of aliens, Duke Nukem is a relic from an era that was barely patrolled by the political correctness police. How many of your current-gen heroes tell a boss they're gonna rip off their head and shut down their neck – and then prove that the comment wasn't a metaphor? Zero. That's how many.



10 KING OF ALL COSMOS

AS SEEN IN: KATAMARI DAMACY SERIES

Katamari Damacy is messed up at the best of times, but things enter a new level of lunacy whenever this effeminate king opens his mouth. When he isn't spewing rainbows, he's scratch-talking hilarity. Also, you really can't fault a guy who gets drunk enough to accidentally destroy every star in the universe. That's a Friday night to aspire to, right there.

9 CAPTAIN JOHN PRICE

AS SEEN IN: CALL OF DUTY MODERN WARFARE SERIES

Best. Beard. In Gaming. Price is the man. Thanks to his ancestor appearing in a previous *COD* game, you just know for a fact that this modern day Price is a thoroughbred bad-arse. He's death distilled and serves as the perfect mentor – not just for you and your player character, but for all men.



8 OFFICER TANNER AS SEEN IN: DRIVER SERIES

He's not an entirely well-defined character – particularly in the first game – but the nature of the series gives Tanner this mysterious Steve McQueen aura that's hard to shake. We're not even sure he'll return for the Ubisoft-backed instalment of this long-running franchise, but we liked being him while it lasted.



6 BAYONETTA

AS SEEN IN:
BAYONETTA, EVERY TEENAGE BOY'S WET DREAM

She's more than just a sultry witch with a skin-tight costume and provocative librarian specs. Packing style, from the way she oozes across the screen when walking to acrobatically twisting herself into knots when loosing off a volley of bullets, she's also a confident, intelligent character. This is one witch you'd want to be spellbound by.



7 DAXTER (AND JAK)

AS SEEN IN: JAK & DAXTER SERIES

Life handed Daxter some lemons by turning him into an ottsel (half otter, half weasel) - Daxter responded by making a cool refreshing drink. Daxter is the hero that most of us are afraid we are. He's just a little too concerned, a little bit afraid, and he would rather take the easy way out. As far as sidekicks go, Daxter is pretty hard to beat.





5 NIKO BELIC

AS SEEN IN: GRAND THEFT AUTO IV

Through the eyes of this truly memorable anti-hero, we're shown that the "American Dream" is really just the same old, re-branded nightmare. Along with his ruthless efficiency and 'wet-work' skills, Niko also managed to be one of the more funnier game characters in recent memory. We could sit and listen to him sarcastically take the piss out of Brucie all day.

4 "SOAP" MACTAVISH

AS SEEN IN: CALL OF DUTY MODERN WARFARE SERIES

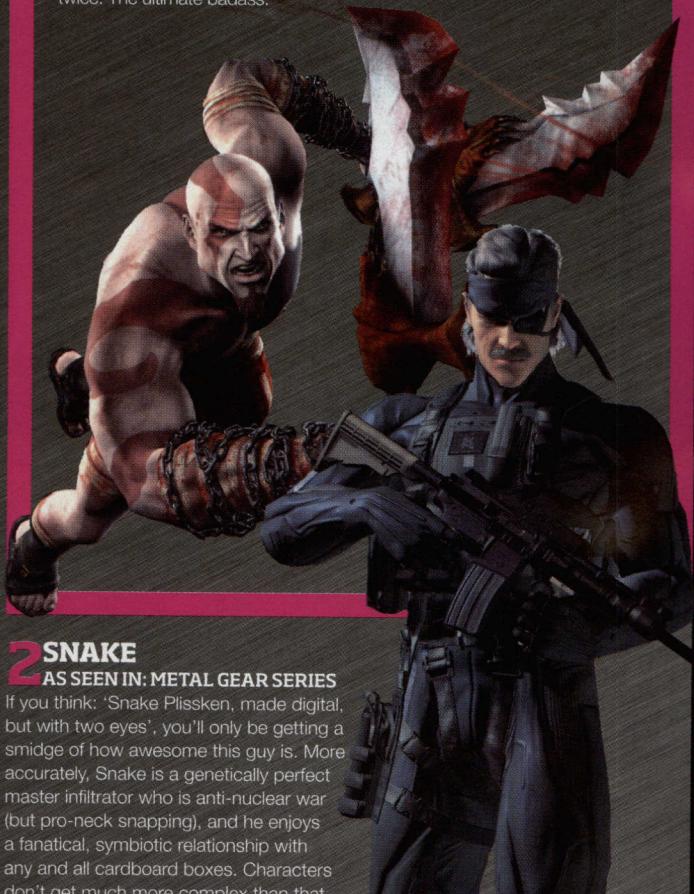
The leading-man in the most lucrative entertainment product launch in history, this no-nonsense Scot will go down as one of gaming's greatest tough guys. Everything about him is carefully crafted to scream hardcore – the scars, the shaved Mohawk, the gruff accent. Always in control, and he will totally throw a knife in your face if necessary.



3 KRATOS

AS SEEN IN: GOD OF WAR SERIES

If you were to arrive home to find Kratos playing hide the hydra with your wife, you'd best go fetch him a beer and stand there in case he gets thirsty. That's just how it is. When it comes to bloodletting, nobody kills better – or more frequently – than Kratos. Not even death can stop him – and it's tried twice. The ultimate badass.



2 SNAKE

AS SEEN IN: METAL GEAR SERIES

If you think: 'Snake Plissken, made digital, but with two eyes', you'll only be getting a smidge of how awesome this guy is. More accurately, Snake is a genetically perfect master infiltrator who is anti-nuclear war (but pro-neck snapping), and he enjoys a fanatical, symbiotic relationship with any and all cardboard boxes. Characters don't get much more complex than that.

1 NATHAN DRAKE

AS SEEN IN: UNCHARTED SERIES

You've got to love the Drake. Nate is an "everyman" adventurer that tends to hide his vast knowledge of the world around him. He can speak several languages, such as Indonesian, 16th Century Spanish, and Latin. Plus, he can kick arse in a gun fight – even when crazily outnumbered, while climbing about like a spider monkey. Eat your heart out, Indy.

FINAL FANTASY XIII

It's almost here. It's massive. Say hello to the game that's going to take over your life

We want you to remember the first time you saw an illustration of the solar system. Go two planets up from the Earth and you'll find Jupiter, the largest celestial body out of the eight 'proper' planets. *Final Fantasy* is like Jupiter. It's big, but you just don't realise how big it is until you compare it to the other massive objects close by. Unlike the mighty planet, *FFXIII* isn't just full of gas. There's mass to go with its volume.

There's no doubt that the game most of the PlayStation faithful associate with the *Final Fantasy* tag is *Final Fantasy VII*. Permanently branded onto players' psyche, it has sold over 10 million copies since its release in 1997, which makes it the best selling *Final Fantasy* to date. *FFXIII* is roughly a tenth of the way to this milestone as in its first week on sale in native Japan late last year the public snapped up 1.3 million copies. It helps that the director of *FFVII*, Yoshinori Kitase, is the producer of this first true high-definition *Final Fantasy*. Also, *FFVII*'s event planner, Motomu Toriyama, is the director here.

Between them they have 29 years of experience on working with RPGs – that's a hell of a long time to

be involved with one genre – and in their own words they "set out to create the best ever *Final Fantasy* as well as presenting the blueprint for future RPGs". That experience, along with a team dedicated to squeezing as much as possible out of your console, means this is an expansive experience. Square Enix has had roughly four years, since *FFXII* on PS2, to craft it. It's not as long as the wait between *Gran Turismos*, but it's definitely up there. The gaming landscape has changed significantly and from our extensive hands on so has *FF*. It's a paradox though; simultaneously more streamlined in the battle system and progression, but also demanding patience and observation when upgrading weapons and noting the damage enemies take during battle.

Since last month we've had much more hands on time with the game. We gave up sunlight and sleep to join the protagonists on the socially ruptured planet of Cocoon. We're nowhere near seeing any sign of the final credits. You may just spend the rest of the year playing this game. That being the case, let us give you a head start and introduce you to the universe of *Final Fantasy XIII*.

WHO'S WHO

FFXIII weaves together the story of many characters over the course of the game, in both present time and flashback. It's a bit like 24, but without Kiefer Sutherland torturing dudes. Although there are more characters than the six we've detailed below, we'd be spoiling far too much if we revealed them all.

SNOW VILLIERS

Snow is a member of NORA, a group of freedom fighters rebelling against the forces of PSICOM who are expelling people branded as l'Cie (potential monsters) or those that may have been in contact with them from the planet, in what's called the 'Purge'. He intends to rescue his fiancée Serah from of the Pulse fal'Cie (the antagonists) but is transformed himself on his rescue mission.



LIGHTNING

An ex-soldier, Lightning is initially cold towards the group she becomes integrated with. Her only purpose is to rescue her sister, Serah (also Snow's fiancée) from the Pulse fal'Cie. However, her destiny changes when she transforms into a l'Cie herself when trying to free Serah. Still headstrong she becomes part of the group trying to discover their new purpose whilst running for their lives.



HOPE

Along with his mother, Hope is caught up in the Purge, bound for relocation – or probable extermination. After watching his mother die when she volunteered to fight against PSICOM with Snow's band of rebels, Hope vows revenge against the man he sees as being responsible for her death and follows him to the Pulse Vestige – and inevitable transformation into a l'Cie.



VANILLE

A permanently perky young woman, Vanille's past is a mystery. Bound for 'relocation' on a Purge train, she follows Hope and his mother onboard, and witnesses the death of the young boy's mother. Escaping with Hope to the Pulse Vestige, she encourages him to say what he must to Snow – and also becomes caught up in the destiny of the five other people she meets there.

SAZH KATZROY

Not much is known about the man with a tiny Chocobo chick that hides in his hair, although he does carry matching hand-cannons that are the only ranged weapons we've seen so far. The first time we see Sazh as he emerges with Lightning from a train carrying Purge passengers. After Snow and his group free them, Sazh reluctantly follows her into the Pulse Vestige.

FANG

Voiced by an Australian voice-actress in the western release of the game, Fang is branded with a l'Cie tag that is scorched and twisted. Although she ought to be an enemy of the military, Fang seems to be leading a military unit who capture Snow after his battle with PSICOM and the game's first Eidolon, Sheva. Give her a haircut and a red top, and she could pass as Chloe from *Uncharted 2*.

PUNCH ON

You're going to meet a lot of bad dudes looking for a fight. Here's how to break down the battle screen

TARGET

Your opponent's health. 'Nuff said.

TARGET

STAGGER BAR

Hit your opponent quickly and decisively and its Stagger bar will fill up. Once it reaches its peak, you'll do much more damage than your normal attacks. Think of it like a combo system where the faster you attack the more likely you are to keep the attack going.

Pulsework Knight

100.0% / 130.0%

HP AND PARADIGM INDICATOR

HP is your health points, and 'Rav' (Ravager) and 'Com' (Commando) refer to your Paradigm status. There's also Medic and Synergist for defensive roles.

TECHNICAL POINTS

Used for 'Techniques', which differ from regular attacks. One technique, Libra, scans enemies for weaknesses and stats so you can change your strategy. Another technique is your Summon, which takes multiple TP bars. Your TP bar regenerates over time.

PARADIGM SHIFT

You only ever control the party leader, so tapping alters your team's strategy to give some instruction to the rest of your party members. These 'paradigms' can be switched on the fly between a set of predetermined combinations, so your party might all attack with physical attacks or magic, be defensive or just keep healing. Or it might be a combination of these. You'll need to experiment with the paradigms to make it through a battle unscathed.

ATB

Your 'Active Time Bar' fills up automatically. Once it's full you can launch attacks or techniques (like spells). Depending on the complexity of the attack, it may take one or two segments of the ATB or the whole thing.

Snow	RAV	HP 1007
Lightning	COM	HP 0441
Sazh	RAV	HP 0829

THE PLAYER'S VOICE

We threw open the Facebook page at tinyurl.com/OPSAus to find out what you think about the PS3's first *Final Fantasy* title.

Josef Barker: Nothing beats *Final Fantasy*

Michael John Williams: I can't wait for *Final Fantasy XIII*. Ever since I saw *Final Fantasy VIII* as a kid, I was converted to a gamer. They just keep getting better solving problems like random battles and the like.

Arch Sta: Looks like it's a lot of fun and I love how you choose if you want to fight or not and instead of random pop ups. That got annoying, sometimes you just walked five steps and you get attacked. Can't wait until *FFXIII* is out.

Jason Hickman: One of the things I like about the series is that any *FF* takes you so long to finish. You always get value for your money, always good gameplay and there are always extras galore and sometimes the extras are better than the storyline.

Robert Hamblet: If those [four] years of development time make an amazing game above other competitors I'm happy with that.

Declan Ladbrooke-Bower: I've finished 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,9 and 12. I didn't like 8 or 10 they were too stale for my liking. I don't really mind [how long it takes to finish a *Final Fantasy* title] at all. I am looking forward to the side-quests though.

Chris Cowell: I was very excited when I saw trailers and video footage of the game, but was extremely upset reading reviews of the game that has been released in Japan where pretty much everyone was bagging it out for being too linear and unfinished.

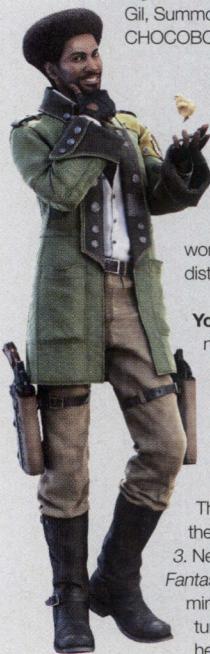
Andrew Maddock: The thing I like with the *FF* games is even though they're set in completely different worlds you have a common stream of things that bind them together: I'm talking Gil, Summons, Moggles and of course CHOCOBOS!

Scott Heyne: I loooove *Final Fantasy*, pumped for *XIII*. That's enough for me.

Beno Napier: I love the art style! It's beautiful, sleek, realistic graphics work even for the huge weird disturbing creatures!

Yousha Ghahem: I have never played *Final Fantasy* although this one seems to be interesting. I might give this one a go.

Andrew Threlfall: Not looking forward to it at all. The RPG genre for me is with the likes of *Oblivion* and *Fallout 3*. Never been a fan of any *Final Fantasy* game. I know I'm in the minority, but I just don't like the turn based fighting and the heavy Japanese influence.



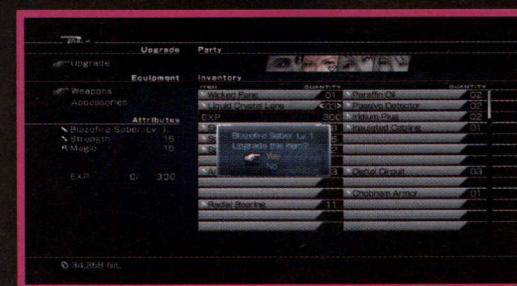
THE BIGGEST STICK

As well as lobbing magic, your characters also have physical weapons. Although you can find powerful guns and such in chests scattered throughout the world, you can upgrade your existing weapon of choice with items dropped by defeated foes at any save point. Here are five steps to making your arsenal that little bit more deadly.



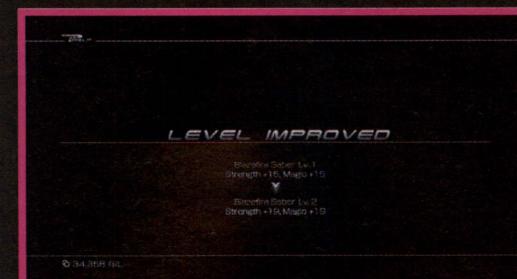
STEP 1

Pick your weapon. The highlighted face at the top tells you whom the weapon belongs to. You'll want to max out its Exp (Experience).



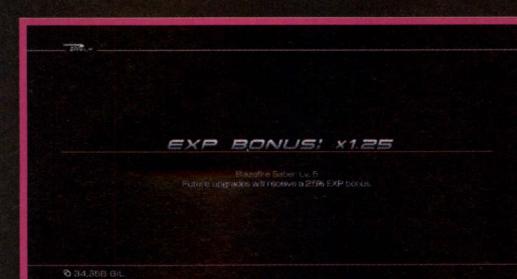
STEP 2

Pick an item. Each one will give your weapon a certain amount of experience. In this case, three lots of Liquid Crystal Lens will apply 300XP to Lightning's weapons. Just the right amount to max out this level of Exp.



STEP 3

Ding! Level up, and the result in this case is more Strength and Magic. This process can also be applied to Accessories that alter your resistance to attacks/magic, etc.



STEP 4

If you apply the right amount of items and in a certain combination, you'll also get an experience multiplier bonus, meaning you'll be able to level up faster. How do you know which items and how many? Experimentation.



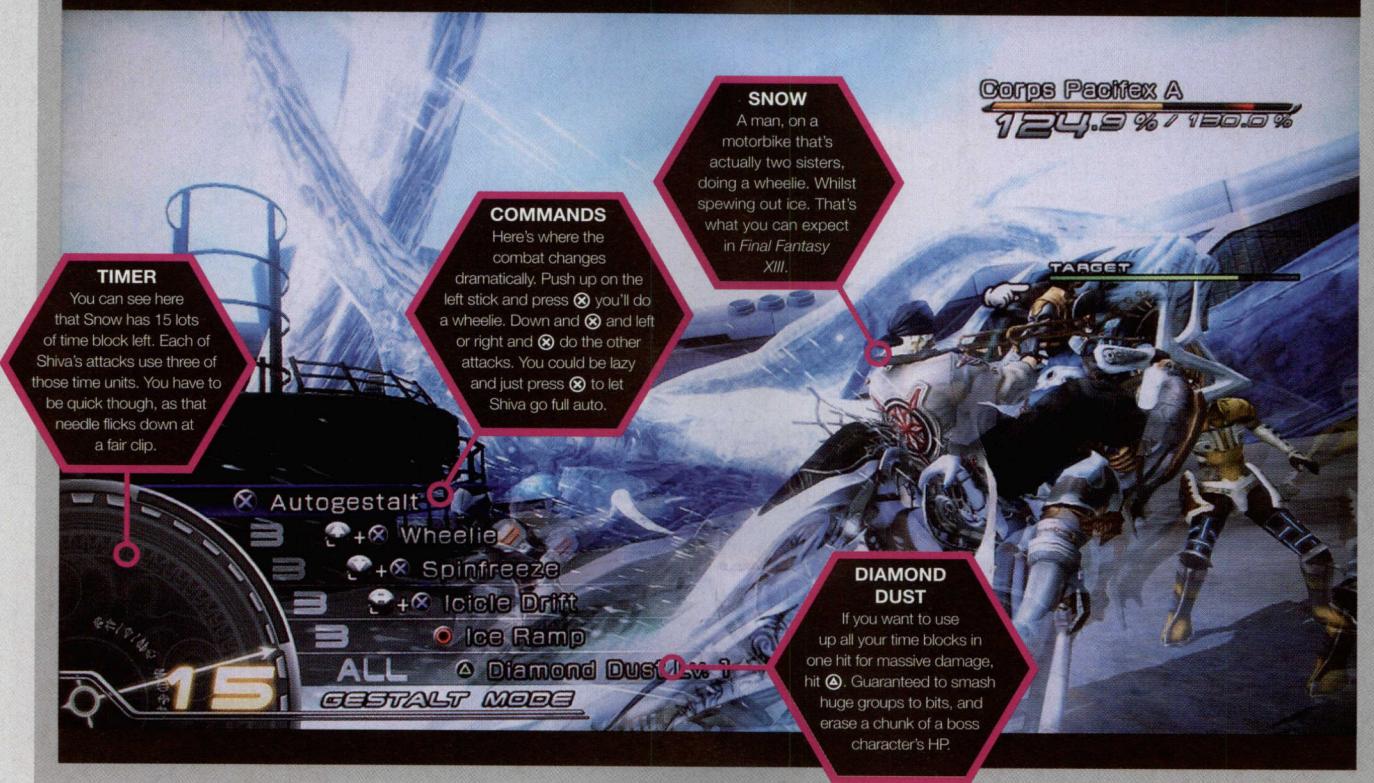
STEP 5

Got a bunch of superfluous stuff? You can sell it for Gil, or you can dismantle it for more items to upgrade your gear. Some items can only be found by dismantling weapons and accessories.

EIDELONS IN DISGUISE

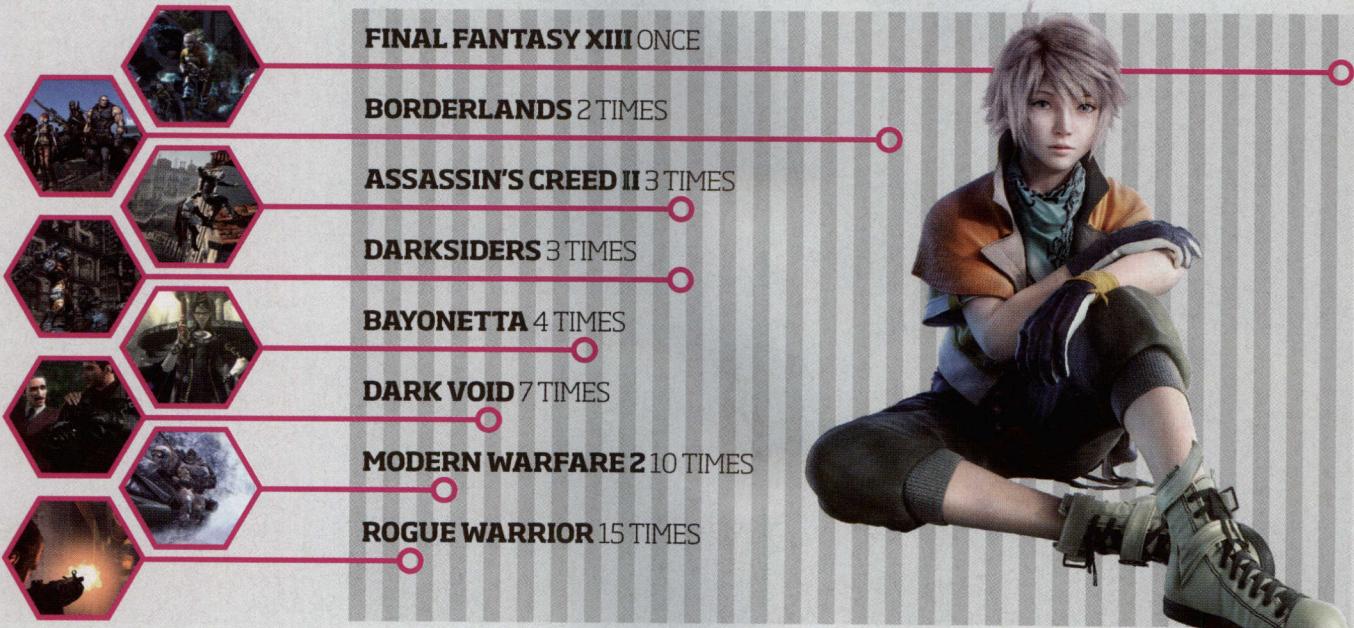
All the Eidelons (your Summons) we've seen so far have something in common: they turn into something you can ride on. Snow's summon, Shiva, becomes a motorbike, and Odin, Lightning's Eidelon, becomes a horse. These transformations look glorious and they do a fair bit of damage too in both their elemental form and gestalt transformation.

Your Eidelons can either fight with the party leader, dealing damage as they see fit, when initially summoned or if you tap **Ⓐ** they shift to their other, rideable and controllable, form. This is what to expect when they transform.



FINAL FANTASY XIII: A TIMELINE

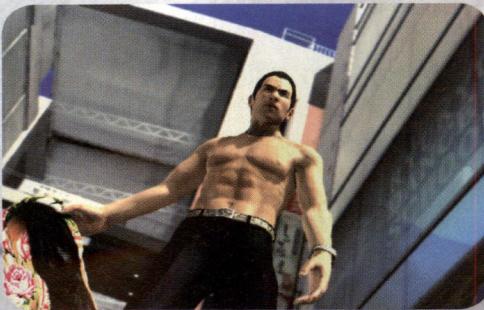
60 hours. The game's creators told us it will take that long to finish FFXIII if all you do is follow the storyline. What other games can you finish in that time?



OPS / SEGA PROMOTION

YAKUZA™ 3

GUNS, FISTS, TATTOOS. OH MY!



Since it launched in 2006, the Yakuza series has been one of the most spectacular representations of the seedy side of Tokyo, gaining high praise from critics all across the globe. It's just that you probably never noticed it. Prepare to be schooled by Kazuma Kiryu, the lead character who has suffered imprisonment to take the blame for a backstabbing friend, as well as trying to prevent all out war between the Yakuza clans. He's also got a rad dragon tattoo.

Though this sequel features the sandy beaches of Okinawa as well as the familiar red light district of Tokyo, it's no holiday. Kazuma is a man who is happy to let fists fly but is also street smart, and the story unfolds with the brutal action. As you engage in over 100 missions and multiple side quests, expect to string together brutal fighting moves that take advantage of Kazuma's skills, as well as exploiting the environment both inside and outside. Use walls to soften up opponents, and pick up loose objects to use as melee weapons that extend your range, or lob them as projectiles.

It also looks lush. Landmarks from Okinawa and Tokyo will be recognisable that make the Yakuza 3 experience authentic, and visit bars and restaurants on your quest for peace. This is one dragon you'll want to ride.

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WHAT WE'VE
BEEN DOING
THIS MONTH

45%	Drilling people in the face
25%	Executing space marines
20%	Total fistbump destruction
10%	Smiting unbaptised babies



We choose to review our games on a super-slick Full HD 1080p 40" Bravia X-series for the best picture possible. This sucker melts eyeballs!



"The aesthetics and atmosphere have been spliced up to the eyeballs"

BIOSHOCK 2

REVIEW
RATING

PlayStation
GOLD AWARD

PlayStation
SILVER AWARD

PlayStation
BRONZE AWARD

10 Incredible: Perfection is relative and elusive, and no game will ever be perfect. Our 10 doesn't mean a game is flawless, it means a game has done everything it set out to do in an amazing fashion and thus it deserves our highest possible praise.

9 Excellent: An outstanding game, either limited by its scope, sequel status (and lack of improvement) or a few minor blemishes from being a 10. Likely one of the very best in its genre, a 9 comes with high praise.

8 Great: Still well ahead of the pack in most departments, despite a few issues here and there. Thoroughly recommended.

7 Good: A robust package that does a solid job despite a bunch of moderate problems. Enjoyable in parts, just not fantastic overall.

6 Decent: This game will have some noticeable flaws that may make it hard to recommend to those who aren't fans of the genre, but it will do more right than it does wrong. Just.

5 Mediocre: A conceded pass, if you know what we mean. Half okay, but half-busted. Might scrape by for fans, but few will want to play a game that half sucks.

4 Poor: Anything below 5, strictly speaking, is a fail – but there are degrees of 'bad' just as there are degrees of 'good'. A 4 is unrefined, partially broken and poorly designed.

3 Very disappointing: Things start to go very wrong here – fundamentally flawed in many ways, boring and close to pointless.

2 Terrible: Virtually nothing good here at all, and definitely not worth the effort of removing the wrapper.

1 The worst: Reserved for the very worst gaming could ever offer. A broken, offensive mess without a single redeeming quality.

BioShock 2

WORSE THAN

BIOSHOCK



BETTER THAN

REGULAR SHOCK

PlayStation[®]
Official Magazine - AustraliaSILVER
AWARD

INFO

FORMAT: PS3 | GENRE: SHOOTER | RELEASE: NOW | DISTRIBUTOR: 2K GAMES
| DEVELOPER: 2K MARIN/2K AUSTRALIA | PLAYERS: 1-10 | RRP: \$109.95

BIOSHOCK 2

Causing troubles with Mr. Bubbles

It's all about the Adam. Harvesting (that is, murdering) a Little Sister: 160 ADAM. Adopting a Little Sister, getting her to harvest two corpses for 60 ADAM a pop, and turning her back into a normal little girl again for an additional 80 ADAM: priceless. You can also secure ADAM sea slugs when wandering on the ocean floor, or pilfer it off defeated Big Sisters.

The game takes place 10 years after the patricidal events of the first game with the

main antagonist taking the form of clinical psychiatrist Sofia Lamb. Lamb was once a political enemy of Andrew Ryan until he had her silenced and locked away (which is why we never heard her ramblings before now). Now that Ryan has gone to that 'big putting green in the sky', Lamb has reappeared and come to power thanks to a new cult philosophy that is the antithesis of Ryan's objectionist beliefs. She is the champion of collectivism which, basically, is the idea of achieving a utopia by unifying all of Rapture into one massive mutated Manson family.

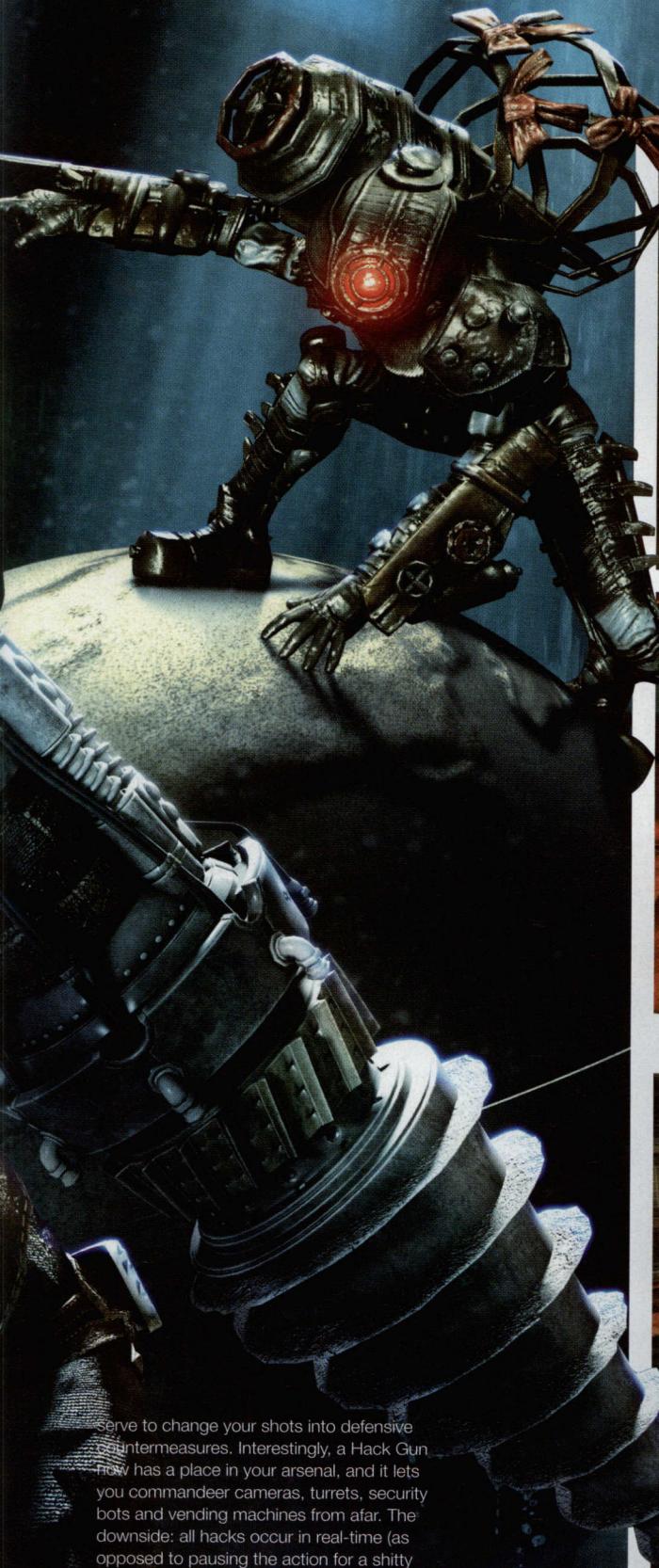
You begin life as a Big Daddy designated 'Delta' – the first of your kind to successfully share a physiological bond with a single Little Sister. Through mysterious events in the game (that we won't spoil here), you're put out of commission for 10 years, before waking up at the start of the timeline of this game. You also find yourself to be unique to all other Big Daddies by still possessing your own free will. Thus begins a hellish journey

of self-discovery that is forwarded by the telepathic advice of your own bonded Little Sister, Eleanor Lamb – daughter of the queen bitch herself. Smells like a fiercely thickening plot, no?

Before you can reach your adoptive daughter you'll have to cut a swath through the local weirdos, and being a combat specialist badass in a diving suit certainly has its upsides. Strapped to your right mitt is the iconic Big Daddy drill which greatly expands the fisticuffs action of the fights. You also gain access to a slew of new weapons previously unavailable in the original; including a .50 cal machine gun that could easily be designated an anti-aircraft weapon, an 'impale-o-licious' spear gun, and one of the sweetest double-barrelled shotguns ever conceived by mankind. As before, each of these weapons may be upgraded with nasty secondary ammo types that can imbue your attacks with additional elemental damage, armour-piercing properties or they can

IT'S ALL
ABOUT
THE ADAM

Harvesting (that is, murdering) a Little Sister: 160 ADAM. Adopting a Little Sister, getting her to harvest two corpses for 60 ADAM a pop, and turning her back into a normal little girl again for an additional 80 ADAM: priceless. You can also secure ADAM sea slugs when wandering on the ocean floor, or pilfer it off defeated Big Sisters.



Serve to change your shots into defensive countermeasures. Interestingly, a Hack Gun now has a place in your arsenal, and it lets you commandeer cameras, turrets, security bots and vending machines from afar. The downside: all hacks occur in real-time (as opposed to pausing the action for a shitty minigame of *Pipe Dream*). That said, you'd best not be under fire when you try to scam that free can of cola.

As if drilling someone in the face while screaming, "Screw you, Benny!" isn't good enough, *BioShock 2* also introduces true dual-wielding this time around. All of your favourite Plasmids can be instantly unleashed via the **X** button and can even be used in conjunction with one another. For example; you can drop a Cyclone Trap and then imbue it with a Winter Blast plasmid. After that you can kick back and watch an attacking splicer get frozen, flung across the room, and shattered into a million pieces as he slams into a bulkhead.



Big Daddy Day Care. Closed, pending multiple murder trials



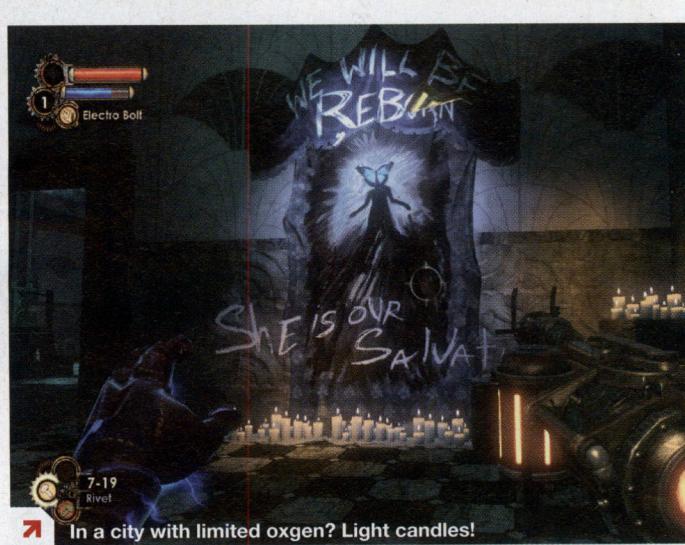
One. Awesome. Boomstick



The combat is riveting. Geddit?! Rivet gun... the combat is... Forget it



Don't act like you never considered mainlining red cordial before



1.21 Gigawatts. Great Scott...



It's moments like this that really reinforce how intelligent a game *BioShock 2* is. If you're shrewd enough you'll have a ridiculous amount of strategic options. You'll need every single one of them too, because being a Big Daddy comes with some added responsibilities. As in the first game you can either rescue a Little Sister, or harvest her precious ADAM, once you've eliminated her bodyguard. However, *BioShock 2* gives you a third option in the form of gathering additional ADAM from two corpses per Sister. Once you set her down to do the deed, the game quickly becomes an exercise in survival, with all manner of Splicers (including the mammoth new Brute type) out to murder you. These encounters are a stroke of genius that reward sensible planning and they actually manage to make the piss-weak defensive plasmids of the first game extremely useful.

Visually, the level-designs in this sequel are a cut above what we saw in the original. 10 years of time has ravaged both the faces of the junkie Splicers and the city they live in. Most notably, the ocean has started reclaiming Rapture with bioluminescent coral that bathes the chaotic corridors in seductive hues of pink and orange. This visual feast moves onto dessert with improved water tech, 'breathtaking' outside sections, and a better lighting system that will, literally, have you jumping at your own shadow.

The series also gets a shot in the arm in terms of longevity, thanks to a brand new multiplayer mode. Something that immediately sets it apart from the crowd is it has a story attached to it and takes place in a completely different time period to the single-player campaign. Waking up in a classy



Too cute to live?



Sisters: doing it for themselves



"The aesthetics and atmosphere have been spliced up to the eyeballs"

Rapture apartment in 1959, you stumble over to the TV to hear Andrew Ryan's "Happy New Year" speech, followed by a city wide broadcast that signals the start of the civil war. After selecting a Rapture citizen as an avatar, the apartment becomes your options hub where you can equip two firearms, two plasmids, and three gene tonics. You may then run to your own personal bathysphere, select a match, and get onto killing your fellow citizens in iconic, unspoiled areas from the first game. You wield the weapons used by Jack in the original game and can upgrade them with unlocked perks, earn additional plasmids, and even unleash hell with a Big Daddy suit power-up. While the solid action on offer is no *Modern Warfare* 2-killer, it still rocks pretty hard.

There are other parts of *BioShock 2* that don't impress us quite as much though. Whereas the original had serpentine plot twists – but sported a rather lacklustre ending – *BioShock 2* proves to be the exact inverse of that. Your many decisions to kill/save Little Sisters (and to spare or murder certain boss

characters) will uniquely affect an individual, satisfying ending. But, honestly, we found ourselves missing the masterful storytelling and shocking revelations that should have occurred somewhere in the middle of the whole experience. In that sense, if you held *BioShock 2* up against *BioShock*, the former would be slightly inferior.

However, this worthy sequel manages to tweak the formula for the better in other areas. The revised combat system is that much more intense and sublime, the aesthetics and atmosphere have been spliced up to the eyeballs, and there's a kick-ass multiplayer mode that should keep you coming back for more arse-kicking.

Following up on a much acclaimed, much beloved 'game of the year' is quite a difficult feat to successfully pull off – but 2K Marin has performed admirably. While we think this sequel might not immerse you as thoroughly as the original *BioShock* did, there's enough added depth in other areas of this sequel that should easily suck you back under for another tumble. **B Adam Mathew**

FINAL SAY:

PRESENTATION

A *Finding Nemo* colour palette utterly invigorates this atmospheric, underwater nightmare

SOUND

Wonderful audio diary voice acting and the meatiest shotgun sound imaginable

CONTROLS

Dual-wielding makes complete sense, time-based hacking minigame keeps the action flowing

REPLAY VALUE

Multiplayer is full of perks and throwback details to *BioShock*. You're not leaving Rapture soon.

VERDICT: Plot-wise, this doesn't match the original. However, the combat has been spliced to near-perfection.

9

WHY SO GRIM?

Not one to take death lying down, Dante promptly fights back when Death tries to get him in his clutches. He eventually manages to cheat and kill Death. He immediately trades in his puny poleaxe and lugs around Death's scythe permanently. The fringe benefit of said scythe is that it reaps souls, and souls can be used to trade in for better moves, increased health and magic, and so forth. This works in conjunction with the Punish or Absolve mechanic. Punishing sinners will net you a stronger scythe, but those walking a righteous path will get a stronger crucifix weapon. The crucifix is *Dante's Inferno*'s primary ranged weapon.

INFO

FORMAT: PS3 | GENRE: ACTION | RELEASE: NOW | DISTRIBUTOR: EA
DEVELOPER: VISCERAL GAMES | PLAYERS: 1 | RRP: \$109.95

PlayStation[®]
Official Magazine - Australia
BRONZE AWARD

DANTE'S INFERNO

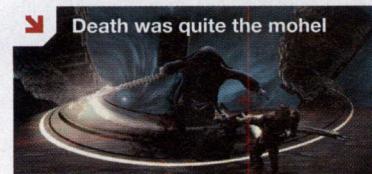
See you in Hell



Glow for show, scythe for a pro



Not pictured: Almighty Jeebus



Death was quite the mohel



WORSE THAN

BILL & TED'S BOGUS JOURNEY



BETTER THAN

DRAG ME TO HELL



One of the bigger problems the Catholic Church has faced over the years was the problem of children who died before they were baptised – particularly babies.

You see, according to the Catholic Church (before the 13th Century), ALL unbaptised people, (including newborns) who died would go to Hell. This was because original sin had not been 'cleansed' by baptism.

This concept was criticised by Peter Abelard, a French philosopher,

who said that sending infants to Hell would be kind of a dick move on God's part and introduced the idea of 'Limbo' – a state of existence where unbaptised babies would be spared Hell, but still be barred from Heaven.

The idea became generally accepted. This make-it-up-as-you-go-along attitude is not exactly uncommon when it comes to religion.

Amazingly – to us, anyhow – it wasn't until 2007 that the Church (kind of) changed its mind. Apparently, there are "reasons to hope" God doesn't send tiny, precious little babies to the outskirts of Hell anymore. Maybe. They're not positive. Note to Pope: you can stop wondering why Church attendance is in a freefall.

We mention this because we had to do some research after, under an hour into *Dante's Inferno*, we were attacked by a screaming horde of unbaptised babies with swords instead of arms. These babies are in Limbo, the First Circle of Hell in the epic

14th Century poem upon which this game is based. They're crying as they waddle towards you. It could be the freakiest shit ever to befall us in more than two decades of videogaming.

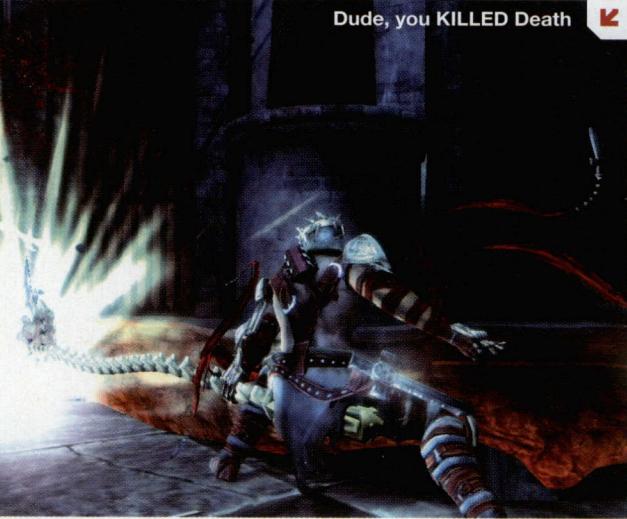
What Visceral Games is doing here is living up to its new name. Playing *Dante's Inferno* you get the feeling that nobody at Visceral is holding anything back. A few months ago we explored just where exactly the moral compass of the average gamer points. Kill a baby, level up, we joked. Now we actually are.

This isn't loose-wristed criticism though, and we'll stress that we're not offended. We just felt it was worthwhile pointing it out. The developers themselves don't even make a big deal out of it – they're just briefly there, in your face, for a few waves and then they're gone. What it does illustrate, however, is that *Dante's Inferno* is Hell without compromise. Several centuries ago this is what people

“What Visceral Games is doing here is living up to its new name”



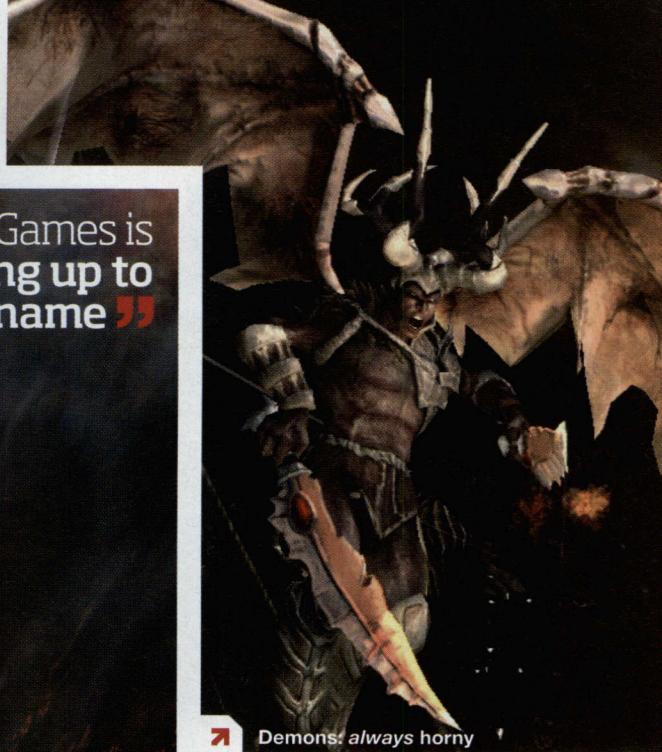
Dude, you KILLED Death



thought of when they pictured Hell. Some wackjobs persist in doing so. All Visceral has done is burn it to a Blu-ray.

Like we've mentioned, *Dante's Inferno* is loosely based on the first part of Dante Alighieri's Divine Comedy. Players will assume the role of Dante as he fights his way through the nine Circles of Hell to save his beloved Beatrice from Lucifer. The large scythe in his hand belongs to Death, or rather 'belonged to' Death. You'll literally defeat Death not 10 minutes into proceedings. Like we said, this is an unrestrained game. In *Dante's Inferno*, the first boss is Death and after you kill him things only get worse.

It's the art direction that impresses most, with each Circle boasting a unique identity. You'll fight through all nine. We won't exhaustively detail what to expect lest we spoil anything, but they're as unhinged as you'd expect. It's a great looking game, backed by a powerful score. Full marks for



Demons: always horny

presentation, and extra credit for imagination.

But it's not without fault. One, we would've preferred Visceral to have chosen a consistent way to present the game's story sequences. As it stands they're a mix of in-engine cut-scenes, pre-rendered FMV and stylishly illustrated full-colour stills.

More importantly, however, the game also could've done a lot more to distinguish itself from the series it takes the bulk of its inspiration from. For a while it's quite distracting just how virtually-identical *Dante's Inferno* is to the *God of War* series. We find ourselves in a position where we feel we don't even need to detail how the gameplay itself functions. Combat, collecting orbs, souls... it truly is a straight lift. We found ourselves, at least initially, fascinated by trying to anticipate the next gameplay mechanic that'll be copied wholesale from the Sony series rather than simply enjoying what we currently had in front of us.

To be fair, though, being too similar to another great game doesn't make *Dante's Inferno* a bad one. For fans of hack and slash, and those anxiously awaiting the return of Kratos, you could do a helluva lot worse than this. **Luke Reilly**

FINAL SAY:

PRESENTATION

Horrible creatures, hellish environments – it's like a sick comic book come to life.

SOUND

The walls of the damned provide some of the most unsettling audio ever.

CONTROLS

It's *God of War*, without Kratos. We can't describe it any more succinctly than that.

REPLAY VALUE

Good for at least two playthroughs – you won't earn every upgrade in one.

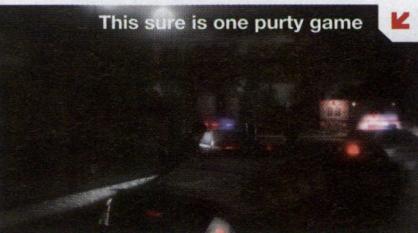
VERDICT: Derivative and simple, but well-produced and very playable. Please, just go to Hell.

8

This sure is one party game

Trenchcoat + clothes = rookie error

The 'I'll turn this car around' minigame



INFO

FORMAT: PS3 | **GENRE:** ADVENTURE | **RELEASE:** FEBRUARY 25
DISTRIBUTOR: SONY | **DEVELOPER:** QUANTIC DREAM | **PLAYERS:** 1 | **RRP:** \$109.95

HEAVY RAIN

We can't stop the rain

Heavy Rain is a game about choice. Choice is the primary gameplay mechanic. How you act, when you act and whether or not you do it successfully will define your experience here. The story will unfold depending on how you make it unfold. *Heavy Rain* is barely a game as you and we would understand it, but that's the point.

Heavy Rain is a murder mystery. You'll get to play as four characters, each on the trail of the elusive Origami Killer: a grief-stricken dad, a private eye, an FBI profiler and a sassy journalist.

The thing that will strike you is the visuals, and they're basically without fault. The set dressing is spectacular, the attention to detail unparalleled. The characters themselves are just meticulously drawn and animated – full body and facial motion capture, in addition to a host of

advanced techniques, have made for some of the best-looking videogame characters available. We haven't seen models this good this side of the kind of gear Naughty Dog regularly creates, well, ever.

If you've read anything we've printed previously about *Heavy Rain* you'll know the play the game based on onscreen button prompts and some real-time walking about. *Heavy Rain* caters for a range of potential players by easing up on the more complex button-mashing for those unfamiliar with a DualShock. The button that picks up a cup of hot coffee may be the very same that shoots a gun-wielding suspect in the face during a botched interrogation – it's the context in which the button massaging happens that important. That's where the weight comes from.

As a result, *Heavy Rain* is fresh spin on the point-and-click genre, and one that will very likely find a varied audience – but there are problems. The voice acting is patchy – and this is a serious issue for a game as wordy as this. It's the delivery more than anything, although some of the dialogue is just too unnatural. The dad, Ethan Mars, and his internal monologue always sounds like he's just been shown a card trick he doesn't understand – even during and after terrible circumstances. The voice actor playing Norman Jayden, the FBI agent, regularly

confuses 'get angry' with 'get upset and speak in a high voice'. We just don't buy that this guy is a fed.

The story stumbles periodically too, often due to the extraneous plot threads and ropey devices used to pad out the project. When you take what's essentially a plot for a two-hour Hollywood thriller and stretch it out to a reasonable game length, complete with multiple paths and endings, cracks are going to appear – and they do. We could've done with a few more of the loose ends tied up as well, but perhaps that's just us.

Also, for a game that prides itself so much on choice, there are a few too many occasions where the developers haven't accounted for some pretty obvious ones. We understand players will need a certain degree of shepherding in order to see the story unfold in one of the (presumably) many ways the developers intended. It's odd, however, that apparently no amount of testing uncovered any of these obvious other ways to act. You know that frustration you get when you're watching a film and a character onscreen just refuses to say or do something you would've personally done in a heartbeat? It's compounded here, because you're in charge. In *Heavy Rain* you get to choose whether or not to have a swig of water, or juggle fruit, or go to the toilet

WORSE THAN

MOVIES



BETTER THAN

FAHRENHEIT



PlayStation[®]
Official Magazine - Australia
BRONZE AWARD



Baldy McCueball didn't love his new nickname

"The obligatory sex scene deep in the third act is altogether brainless"

with the door open – but when one character comes into possession of a, let's say, *big box o' clues*, sprinting to a police station full of professional crime fighters begging for help isn't even on the menu.

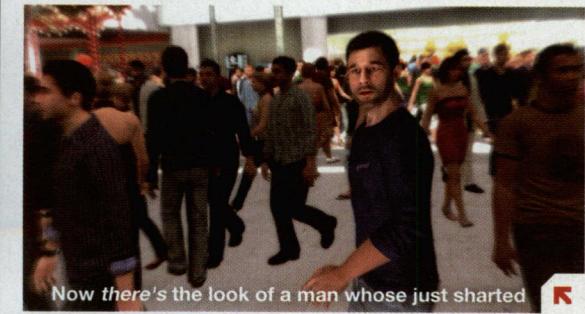
The obligatory sex scene deep in the third act is altogether brainless too. It just seems tacked-on in order to smuggle another glimpse of the journo Madison Page's tits into proceedings (who, by this point we'd seen nude in a shower, undies-around-the-ankles on the can, and gyrating topless for a fat nightclub mogul). We're really trying not to spoil anything here, but rest assured – at this point in the story – the character involved truly does have something a little more

pressing to do than get his end wet. Besides, everybody with a pulse digs nudity, but it's only going to be truly bold if you take away the conveniently placed props from in front of her bawling.

Still, we'd be lying if we said we weren't satisfied with the twisting mystery and its ultimate conclusion. We were addicted. We had to find the killer. It was as jarring to stop playing *Heavy Rain* as it is to turn off a movie halfway through. The story just falls on its face a little too much. That is, our story did anyway.

You see, we can't say whether or not your experience with *Heavy Rain* will be the same as ours. By the time we got to the end, two of our characters were dead. We won't say which. There'll be huge tracts of *Heavy Rain* you'll likely never see, nor will we. David Cage, the writer/director, would prefer if people didn't faff around with retrying chapters looking for the 'best' way through, or trying to 'win'. Regardless, Quantic Dream did include a chapter select feature to go back and play around.

There'll be a lot of chat about *Heavy Rain* in the year to come. It's true that there's nothing else like it on PS3. It's true that, technically, it's an absolute graphical powerhouse. *Heavy Rain* is a remarkable visual achievement. We won't disagree for a moment that *Heavy Rain* isn't deserving of



Now there's the look of a man whose just sharted

praise. It's different, it's thoroughly engaging and it looks incredible. What it is not, however, is a revolution.

Heavy Rain will challenge how gamers define a videogame. It's more than just a movie you participate in; your decisions drive the entire experience. You *should* play it. It's very clever, and lovingly crafted.

But it's not revolutionary.

You see, many decades ago we were introduced to a form of interactive storytelling. A form of storytelling where you would assume the role of a protagonist and make a series of choices that will ultimately determine the ending, and whether you live or die. They were called Choose Your Own Adventure books and it's estimated that around 250 million of them were sold in the '80s and '90s.

We'll extend kudos to Quantic Dream for continuing to evolve its unique brand of gameplay and storytelling. *Heavy Rain* is a true Choose Your Own Adventure game. For our press peers, however? Stop trying to convince us Quantic Dream just invented fire while everybody else is still rubbing two sticks together. **Luke Reilly**

FINAL SAY:

PRESENTATION

Remarkable visuals, true cinematic camera placement and editing.

SOUND

The voice acting isn't always great, but the ambient effects are brilliant.

CONTROLS

Simple Simon-says button-tapping. Shouldn't be too taxing, but not for everyone.

REPLAY VALUE

Massive. Maybe you want to lose a play-battle against your son. Maybe you want to die...

VERDICT: Compelling, different, addictive - *Heavy Rain* is all of these things. Will appeal to gamers and non-gamers alike.

8

Aliens vs Predator

“On sound effects alone it’s hard to go past the stock-standard Pulse rifle”

INFO

FORMAT: PS3 | GENRE: SHOOTER | RELEASE: NOW | DISTRIBUTOR: SEGA
| DEVELOPER: REBELLION | PLAYERS: 1-12 | RRP: \$99.95

ALIEN VS PREDATOR

This'll make you a goddamned sexual tyrannosaur... just like us!



By now you would have surely heard of the kerfuffle surrounding the classification of *Aliens vs Predator*. True to its nature, the OFLC (or OCB, or whatever it's calling itself now), did the usual flip-flop as gamers collectively left out a groan of disbelief as *AVP* was refused classification. This was swiftly followed by a fistbump and sigh of relief as it made it through on appeal, *completely intact*! We don't know what their Midi-chlorian count is, but the Force is apparently strong with Sega, as some last minute Jedi mind-tricks got this puppy over the line.

WORSE THAN

HICKS

**BETTER THAN**

HUDSON



seen in quite some time.

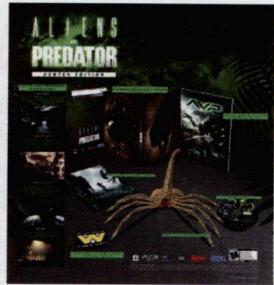
The single-player campaign is broken down into three separate sections, with you utilising each species and their unique skill-sets through first-person perspective. Though each only lasts four to five hours, you shoudln't feel gyped in the slightest by such a short outing, as there's 12-15 hours in total, and the length and balancing of each feels just right.

The marine campaign is by far the most engrossing and atmospheric ride, as it expertly replicates the nail-biting, edge-of-your-seat thrills of the *Alien* franchise. Bucking the trend, there's no zoom for your weapons, very limited ammunition and light is scarce (even with your flashlight and unlimited flares at your disposal). It's a genuinely unnerving, eerie traverse through this overrun Weyland-Yutani science outpost. There are some truly iconic moments, with aliens materialising from walls, brilliantly resembling the Giger masterpieces that inspired them. Facehuggers scramble from creepily opening eggs as Aliens skitter about any surface with such speed you'll almost

catch a glimpse of them in your peripherals a millisecond before they attack – even with the constant beeping of your motion tracker alerting you to the imminent threat.

To offset the hundreds of Aliens and their queen, you'll lay the smack down on a few Predators towards the end of the campaign. Just as it should be, these encounters feel more like a mini-boss battle rather than a generic opponent attack. Your best bet is the chunky smart-gun that tracks their movement, cloaked or otherwise, or the powerful sniper rifle, though on sound effects alone it's hard to go past the stock-standard Pulse rifle.

You'd think an average grunt wouldn't stand a chance against such otherworldly adversaries or the new android enemy (resembling Bishop from the *Alien* films, on steroids), but the extremely effective melee system levels the playing field. After using **L1** and **R1** to block, you'll be prompted to hit **L1** or **R1** to counter and put that xenomorph down for good. In fact, you'll find melee your best friend as a means to conserve ammo, plus bitch-slapping



I'LL GET INSIDE YOUR FACE!

Nowadays limited editions are bollocks, offering trinkets like a mere four-page comic book, player skin, or bonus weapon for your hard-earned dollar. However, the *AVP Hunter* edition is so awesome, it's harder to resist than pole dance from Jessica Alba, as Scarlett Johansson makes you a sandwich and Megan Fox nibbles your feet. You get a steel case, art book, Weyland-Yutani badge and downloadable maps, but where this goes from ho-hum to certified cool is the poseable goddam Facehugger. Expect Facebook to be rife with pics of dudes wrapping these around the old noggin. We know we will be.



This time, it's gore

an Alien or Predator to the ground and unloading a double barrel of pain to the cranium never gets old. Trust us.

After coming to grips with standardised shooting, *AVP* throws the world on its head when playing as Alien. Surprisingly, there's a bit of a story to go with the xenomorph campaign. You're 'Specimen Six' a warrior drone of above-average intelligence who quickly escapes and runs amok.

Those with vertigo, ye be warned, you could be losing your lunch, as the Alien can adhere to pretty much any surface, gravity be damned. Here, the in-your-face shooter becomes all about stealth, as you become invisible, stalking your prey, freeing your brethren and obeying your queen. This is a fantastic recreation with the Alien's sprint something to behold, as you slink across rooftops and ceilings, avoiding sentry guns, circling marines and using hiss to distract as

you shadow your next kill. You may even wish to harvest science officers (displayed in green) by grabbing them from behind and letting your Facehugger buddies give them a little kiss.

To be honest, the death animations are the most violent we've ever seen, with tails through the eye sockets, chest cavity ruptures, slit throats, brutal decapitations, and punching your second set of teeth through skulls. Considering these were in the namesake movies, and only garnered a MA15+ rating at best, we feel it's in keeping with the style and tone. You'll often put yourself in harm's way to get a glimpse of yet another way to munch through some marine's head.

After the second campaign draws to a close as you create a new brood (no surprise to anyone who's seen the movies), you'll play the most devastating of the bunch, the Predator. Already impressive at this point, Predator is where *AVP* really shines. From the cloak, to jumping from tree to tree, the classic triangular targeting shoulder cannon, discs and spear, this baby has it all. True to the films, your cloak disappears in water and if you've a penchant for melee kills, be careful, as it also dissipates during grabs. Brutal doesn't even get close, with heads removed with spinal columns intact, blade through the heart, simple decapitations, and our favourite, pulling off the head and spine through the chest! Un-freakin'-believable!

All your sophisticated weaponry drains power, which is in scarce supply, so you'll need to rely on stealth, distraction (whispering to marines and such), or long

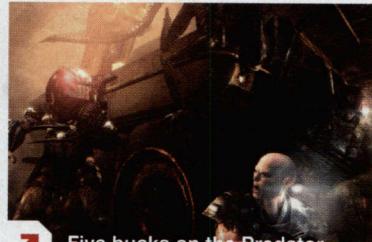
"Short, controlled bursts, my arse!"



Xenomorphs > The Na'vi



Fishnets, huh? Okay...



Five bucks on the Predator

range attacks via disc and the kick-arse spear. You've got dual vision modes with the iconic sweep as you switch between thermal vision and Alien identifier. The background music is ripped right from the cinema, as are the trademark Predator mandible click noises that cement the tone from the first marine down, to the final battle versus a nasty surprise.

This is how movie-inspired titles should be done. Three intense experiences, through the eyes of three entirely different species, all with remarkably differing play styles and arsenals. Also, the co-op survival, and various adversarial multiplayer modes just serve to be the icing on the cake. Wonderfully visualised, incredibly immersive and true to its inspiration, we want more. How often does a licensed title elicit that kind of response? **Dave Kozicki**

FINAL SAY:

PRESENTATION

Sexified! The Marines' sections are dark and claustrophobic, the Aliens' motion-blurred to reinforce sleekness and the iconic Predator thermal scan will have you whispering, "Over here" time and time again.

SOUND

Perfection, with all campaigns brilliantly scored to reflect their movie counterparts.

CONTROLS

Sheer poetry in motion, with each outing a total readjustment from the previous one, though the Predator's jump could be a tad more user friendly.

REPLAY VALUE

Definitely worth several play-throughs, plus there's the whole multiplayer business to boot!

VERDICT: Possibly the greatest movie-inspired title ever. This positively oozes atmosphere and is a must for the fans.

9



WORSE THAN

BORDERLANDS



BETTER THAN

ARMY OF TWO



The one thing they can't mask... is their love



INFO

FORMAT: PS3 | **GENRE:** ACTION | **RELEASE:** NOW | **DISTRIBUTOR:** EA
DEVELOPER: EA MONTREAL | **PLAYERS:** 1-4 | **RRP:** \$109.95

ARMY OF TWO: THE 40TH DAY

Set your fistbump to 'destruction'



A new game comes out and one of the first questions gamers ask is 'does it have co-op?' This sequel, like its maligned predecessor, has it like a dorm party has beer.

The original game was an average action title, let down by niche gameplay moments, such as rigid, predetermined sniping opportunities for you and your buddy, and horrendous racial stereotyping. It was also injected with a 'frat boy' tone that was cringe worthy in places, as the two protagonists, Rios and Salem, swapped phrases Michael Bay would've loved to have in *Bad Boys*. EA Montreal has learned from its mistakes, however *The 40th Day* still does something wrong for every one thing it does right.

Set exclusively in Shanghai, the two mercenaries are quickly embroiled in a terrorist attack on the city and must fight their way out, usually by ducking from cover to cover and working together to out-flank and out-shoot the private army that's tearing the city to shreds. Buildings you're in explode, planes crash, and out-of-control choppers lazily slam into skyscrapers.

The attitude from the outset is that it takes two, baby, to make it through. Enemies will take you to pieces, mostly through their sheer numbers and firepower than intelligence, and it's damned hard to judge

just how much damage you're taking. Having a partner that can take the heat and draw attention while you flank around is essential so that you can do the same for them.

Playing the campaign solo is frustrating. Your partner is usually intelligent, though getting them in just the right spot means you'll be thinking for two. Commands – stop, follow and lead – are mapped on the d-pad, and can be defensive (just doing what you asked) or offensive (constantly firing at enemies whilst doing what you asked). It means that you have to look out for where your partner is, and how he can best serve the purpose. When it works, it's a dream and thoroughly satisfying. When it doesn't, like in some boss fights, death is frequent and you'll be going back to the last checkpoint, and suffering the excruciating load time again and again.

In co-op things get better as you can communicate more effectively, though the rest of the game's flaws still flare up. It looks great in these screenshots but feels a bit woolly in motion, and would have benefited from more polish going in to the environmental textures. The 'heal partner' button is the same as sprint, and the dialogue is still peppered with meat-head phrases.

It's hard to imagine anyone being passionate about the first game, but those loyalists will find a slew of improvements

here. If you passed the first time around we do recommend you try it out. It's by no means great, but for some dumb, short-lived fun with a like-minded mate, you're in the right place. **Paul Taylor**

FINAL SAY:

PRESENTATION

A lively city, decent character animation but scratchy graphics spoil the immersion. The HUD's slick.

SOUND

Meaty explosions, but the audio balance is way off, so dialogue wavers. Plus, Nolan North is in it.

CONTROLS

Sometimes unresponsive when taking hostages, and the same button is used to run, roll and heal.

REPLAY VALUE

Completionists will pore over all the morality moments, and there is a limited multiplayer mode.

VERDICT: It's still dumb but a lot tighter and more fun than the original. Just make sure you play it in co-op, okay?

7

HEART OF DARKNESS

At various points in the story you'll be presented with a 'morality moment', where you have two paths you can take. For instance, spare the security guard and take the guns, or put him down to tool up? Whatever you do, the result is animated in comic-book style pages that show just what happened according to your choice. We like.



Fly directly at the rocks to earn three extra lives



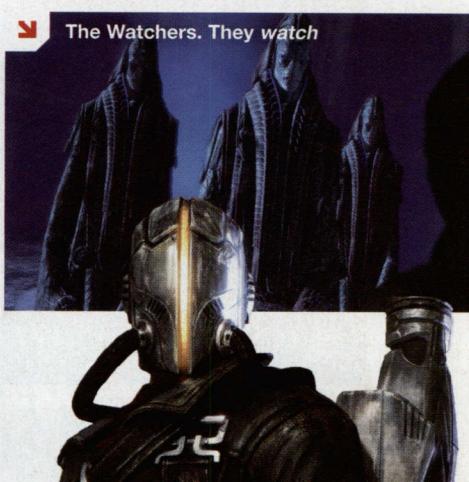
Blue balls of death



Plane-jacking: happens



Unidentified Flying Ordinary-looking... thing



The Watchers. They watch

INFO

FORMAT: PS3 | **GENRE:** ADVENTURE | **RELEASE:** NOW | **DISTRIBUTOR:** THQ
DEVELOPER: AIRTIGHT GAMES | **PLAYERS:** 1 | **RRP:** \$109.95

DARK VOID

Where good ideas come to die

There is no way to escape this following sentence: *Dark Void* is like *Uncharted* with jetpacks, but without the charm, fun and production values of Naughty Dog's masterpiece.

It's an adventure game, with you controlling William Grey, a cargo pilot. Will is sent into the Bermuda triangle and as fate has it his ex-girlfriend Ava joins him, as she's responsible for the cargo. Cue sexual tension. After they crash land Will and Ava find out they're in the Void, a world between worlds, where humans are fighting aliens and robots. Nikola Tesla, the famous inventor, is also trapped in the Void and equips Will with a jet pack to help the humans in the war.

The story starts out as classic sci-fi, but it's unengaging, quickly becoming ludicrous, and the gameplay is a litany of missed opportunities.

Combining on-foot firefights and jetpack-fuelled platforming with free-flying acrobatics ought to be a blast but it feels lame, due to hollow physics and gun play that provides little impact or feedback. There are also

moments, like seeing a huge ship hanging precariously halfway down a waterfall in the first few levels, that should

be breathtaking but the game fails to make any of these sights into a spectacle, instead becoming yet another drab shoot out.

It is possible to seamlessly go from being on-foot to jetting through the glorious blue but your ascent upwards feels like a plane crash in reverse. Performing stunts as you evade attacks is a lot of fun, and your pack is blessed with unlimited shells to spray at the flying enemy craft.

Coming back to earth is another brief shining moment. Gently gliding whilst raining bullets on the robotic troops below is cool, though the amount of ammo needed to permanently flick their switch to 'off' is outrageous. Instead of unloading 60-odd bullets you can usually land a couple of overpowered melee attacks once you're on solid ground to shut down most foes.

Dark Void could've masked its underwhelming nature if its graphics and sound design had more weight to them. Everything needs more than a polish as this looks half-baked, with low-res textures giving no spark to the Void. Enemies have little variety, and the sound of weapons repeating their rat-tat-tat or pew-pew is hollow. Nolan North (see Sound Advice) voices Will, but gives little to the role and all you'll think about is Nathan Drake as he busts out a clever quip here and there.

It's a shame that *Dark Void* ended up this way. The premise of a jet pack alone teases awesomeness but the experience ends up being boring, stymied by uninspiring graphics, lacklustre sound and dull, dull combat. **Paul Taylor**

SOUND ADVICE

As we said, Nolan North voices Will, and we can only guess North's instructions were to "be like Drake". Will always has a quip in any situation, though he doesn't have the same gravitas or distinctive nature as Nate. Bear McCreary, the man behind the music for sci-fi TV series *Battlestar Galactica*, composed *Dark Void*'s score. It's very rich, comprised of a 63-piece ensemble but doesn't lift the game out of the doldrums. Sorry Nolan. Sorry Bear.

WORSE THAN

UNCHARTED



BETTER THAN

IRON MAN



FINAL SAY:

PRESENTATION

A tidy HUD shows off the below benchmark graphics and boring world.

SOUND

Underwhelming score and effects that don't add much life to the so-so action.

CONTROLS

Cool cover system though taking off in tight spaces is a gamble with death.

REPLAY VALUE

Once you've spent a weekend with this, there's not much reason to go back into the Void.

VERDICT: Someone forgot to add 'fun' to the jet pack. There are so many better adventure games to play rather than this.

6

WORSE THAN

GUITAR HERO: METALLICA



BETTER THAN

POST-2009 VAN HALEN



Come on, he's old enough to be your dad! Wait...



INFO

FORMAT: PS3 | GENRE: MUSIC | RELEASE: MARCH | DISTRIBUTOR: ACTIVISION
| DEVELOPER: UNDERGROUND DEVELOPMENT | PLAYERS: 1-4 | RRP: \$89.95

GUITAR HERO: VAN HALEN

Ain't talkin' 'bout love...

The third single band *Guitar Hero*, *Guitar Hero: Van Halen* was released in the US late last year. It was the fourth *GH* title of 2009, and that doesn't include *DJ Hero* and *Band Hero*.

Unfortunately (and this likely explains the wait) *Guitar Hero: Metallica* or *Rock Band: The Beatles* this is not. Each of those titles captured the bands involved far more faithfully than this. In those games the admiration for the bands involved is evident. In *GHVH* it isn't.

For a game obviously pitched first and foremost at ardent Van Halen fans, for instance, it seems odd that huge parts of the band's history are totally ignored. Michael Anthony, bass player of 31 years, is snubbed, as are any songs originally sung by Sammy Hagar or Gary Cherone. What we get is Van Halen in their current form, with David Lee Roth back on vocals for what (we think) is the fourth time he's returned, and Eddie's son Wolfgang on bass. This gets weird when you finish the lucklustre career mode and unlock 'classic' Van Halen, when Wolfgang is simply stuffed into some retro clobber and wheeled out on stage with the rest of them. Wolfgang would've been lucky to have been a twitch in his father's ballbag at the height of Van Halen's popularity.

MIGHT AS WELL JUMP

As of few years back, Van Halen has sold 90 million albums worldwide and have had the most number-one hits on the Billboard Mainstream Rock chart. It's easy to see why you'd make a music starring the band – we just can't see why it wasn't done better. Wolfgang Van Halen is reportedly a big fan of the series, and chose all the support songs. We wonder if he's played *Guitar Hero: Metallica*.

Everything's functional, and a lot of the songs are great to play. The songs are, in most cases, a lot tougher than any of the tracks in *Guitar Hero Aerosmith* – and there are a lot of good ones. Playing five minutes of keyboard on guitar in 'Jump' is odd, but we enjoyed most of what is on offer. Unfortunately, large parts of *GHVH* just feel phoned-in. It just doesn't feel particularly definitive. The career mode is little more than just a series of songs – it tells nothing of Van Halen's rise to fame.

Progress made with *Guitar Hero 5* suddenly vanishes. Drop-in/drop-out play is absent. The ability to export anything is missing too. What gives?

It also doesn't help that at least nine of the non-Van Halen tracks are already available on the *Rock Band* platform. It certainly makes it a slightly less tempting proposition for fans who straddle both camps.

Faith in this project sunk so low in the US that free copies were given away with *Guitar Hero* 5 when it was released late last year. It massively undermined the game, but as a value add-on you really couldn't fault it. It's really not a great game by any stretch, but a big swag of Van Halen tunes for the price of on-the-house is nothing to complain about.

Down here, however, it's virtually a full-

priced title. Just shy of 100 clams is far too rich for our blood, especially for such a flawed game. **Luke Reilly**

FINAL SAY:

PRESENTATION

Should've stuck with the younger avatars. These modern ones aren't working for us.

SOUND

No complaints, unless you count Altar Bridge as a sound. Ha. And you thought *Creed* blew.

CONTROLS

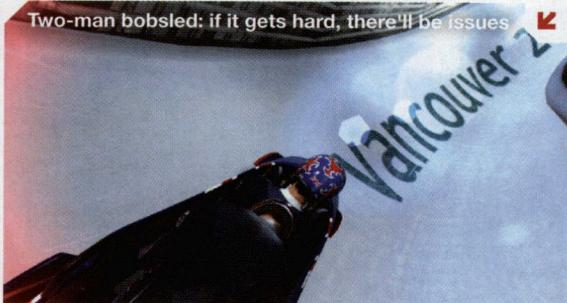
Nothing out of the ordinary here. The charting seems robust enough to us.

REPLAY VALUE

If you don't have *Rock Band* this could sneak into your disc swapping cycle now and then.

VERDICT: Like him or otherwise, Eddie Van Halen is a guitar hero, no doubt. This game just doesn't reflect that.

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**INFO**

FORMAT: PS3 | **GENRE:** SPORTS | **RELEASE:** NOW | **DISTRIBUTOR:** SEGA
DEVELOPER: EUROCOP | **PLAYERS:** 1-4 | **RRP:** \$99.95

VANCOUVER 2010

No business like snow business

Numbers are important here. In Vancouver (the game), there are 14 events that riff on seven different sports. 24 nations confirmed. In Vancouver (the actual games in the actual city) there will be 86 events on 15 different sports. More than 80 nations are anticipated to be there.

Quite a discrepancy, and it shows. It feels like something's missing.

Everything, however, is given a good amount of polish and an unhealthy injection of SEGA's familiar cock-rock as well as bland numpunk during events. Your first selection from the simple but attractive menu screen should be to turn the music off. From there, pick your sport and nation and you're away.

At times you're superbly immersed in the sport, when you're down a ski jump your skis violently vibrate in the tracks before you come off the lip. Bobsleigh, too, is a blast once you get the hang of counter intuitively steering out of then into a corner. This is enhanced when you go to the first-person view

point, the falling snow flicking off the side of your virtual goggles.

Honestly, you'll be hooked for a time on the Alpine Skiing events as it gets very fast, and is definitely easier and more intuitive as you see the action through the goggles. Sound effects are chunky and it sounds like it would hurt to stack it down the mountain. It's also quite pretty and runs smoothly, despite ropey replay animation.

However, the fun ends on Ladies' Aerials, where you pick two types of jumps to perform, and must twiddle the thumbsticks in slow circles to nail the performance. You're graded on more than just your stick work as you have to get your angle of take-off just right as well as the right moment to land, but this main mechanic seems so remote and comes off being pointless. It's an unwelcome hangover from Beijing's diving. Speed skating, too, is a shambles, needing delicate refinements on the shoulder buttons and elite button mashing skills to accelerate.

The challenge pyramids, a separate option to the crippled Olympic games, add some much needed life where each event has different criteria in order to complete. You might have to pass through gates as fast as you can to make a certain accumulative speed in a slalom even, or finish in a certain time in the bobsleigh, or land in a certain zone off the ski jump. It's not addictive but it does mask that there's not much to this.

It's a pity that Vancouver is missing so

much. One of the best events, biathlon (where you have to ski and then shoot targets) is MIA – 2K included it last time and now it's gone. So is ice hockey, moguls, and even curling, which is kinda crap but good for a laugh. Vancouver, then, is unfortunately as appealing as a yellow-snow sandwich. **Paul Taylor**

FINAL SAY:

PRESENTATION

Slick interface from the menu screens to the streamlined HUD.

SOUND

Genuinely awful music offset by solid effects, like howling wind, laboured breathing and skis on snow.

CONTROLS

Stick it in first person mode and you'll be sweet, mostly. Speed skating is a bit ropey.

REPLAY VALUE

Little, as there's sod all to keep you entertained. It needs more content and structure.

VERDICT: Moments of brilliance gone to waste in what could have been a great game. The handful of events last for about one afternoon.

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WORSE THAN

BEING BRADBURY



BETTER THAN

BEIJING 2008



INTERNET

Gaming, trailers, downloads, friends...

ESSENTIAL DOWNLOADS

Download this...

Yakuza 3



"Become Kazuma!" Or, until the game hits later this year, watch the main man smash chumps in this action packed snippet.

Just Cause 2 vehicle stunts



We've never found a video this side of YouTube where we've rewound so often. Entertaining demo of the game's physics.

Guilty Gear PSone



Sure it's old, but this is a gem. And it's dirt cheap for one of the system's best brawlers. For less than \$10 you'd be mad not to try it.

CoD: World at War map bundle



If you're new to PS3 we'll forgive you for not grabbing these maps. Veterans, this is all of the map packs released so far, for less than \$40.

Ad Hoc Party PSP



Got a PSP but no-one to play with? Dry your eyes. This free download lets you play Ad Hoc games over the net.

INFO GENRE: MUSIC | DISTRIBUTOR: EA | DEVELOPER: HARMONIX
PLAYERS: 1-4 | RRP: VARIES

ROCK BAND DLC UPDATE

The hits just keep on coming

Wave after wave of killer rock continues to hit Rock Band, easily the best-supported music game around.

The past weeks have brought with 'Bulls on Parade' by Rage Against the Machine and 'Godzilla' by Blue Öyster Cult – hard-rocking tracks that are plenty of fun to shred.

A six-track Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers pack didn't really light us on fire, although an Alice in Chains five-pack (including 'Grind', 'Heaven Beside You' and 'We Die Young') was neat.

A Blink-182 three-pack satisfied any need for more crowd-friendly pop-punk, and there's no denying the tracks ('First Date', Adam's Song' and 'I Miss You') aren't catchy.

Prior to that we suffered through a woeful country pack, with the only track worth a mention being 'The Gambler' by Kenny Rogers. It's basic, but great for boozy parties.

Other tracks we've grabbed include 'Gives You Hell' by The All-American Rejects, ('If You're Wondering If I Want You To) I Want You To' by Weezer, 'Club Foot' by Kasabian, 'The Sounds of Silence' by Simon & Garfunkel and a Niyana three-pack featuring 'Smells Like Teen Spirit', 'Lithium' and 'Come As You Are'.



VERDICT:

Plenty to download, as usual. Our DLC count has ticked over 300 now, and we're slightly concerned we're going to need a bigger harddrive sooner rather than later.

INFO GENRE: PLATFORMER | DISTRIBUTOR: SONY | DEVELOPER: MEDIA MOLECULE
PLAYERS: 1-4 | RRP: \$9.95

LITTLEBIGPLANET DLC: PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN

Swim, splash and dive all over the LBP-niverse



Have you been to LittleBigPlanet lately? Some of you must have because it now sports over a million user-generated levels. Certainly a generous number of these are crap, but percentage-wise you've got a pretty good chance of some top shelf levels.

Helping this along is the *Pirates of the Caribbean* Level Kit (not to be confused with the costume pack). See, although we've had a pretty constant stream of DLC for LBP, 90 per cent of it has been overpriced costume and sticker packs. Rejoice, as quantity has brought in quality.

For \$9.95 you get some delightful, if a trifle short, water-heavy levels (based extremely loosely on POTC) plus the water itself for use in making your own levels.

Already the changes have been dramatic. No longer do "water levels" require blue glass and a rocket pack, you can now swim through briny depths that, like all elements of LBP,

act and react realistically, making the already spectacular-looking graphics sing.

Plus an improved search feature makes the good levels easier to find.

VERDICT:

If you've grown tired of LBP, or more to the point haven't played for a while, log on and check out this new wrinkle on an already delightful title. It's well worth 10 bucks.

INFO GENRE: SHOOTER | RELEASE: NOW | DISTRIBUTOR: 2K | DEVELOPER: GEARBOX SOFTWARE | PLAYERS: 1-4 | RRP: \$12.95

BORDERLANDS DLC: MAD MOXXI'S UNDERDOME RIOT

Dyin' time's here

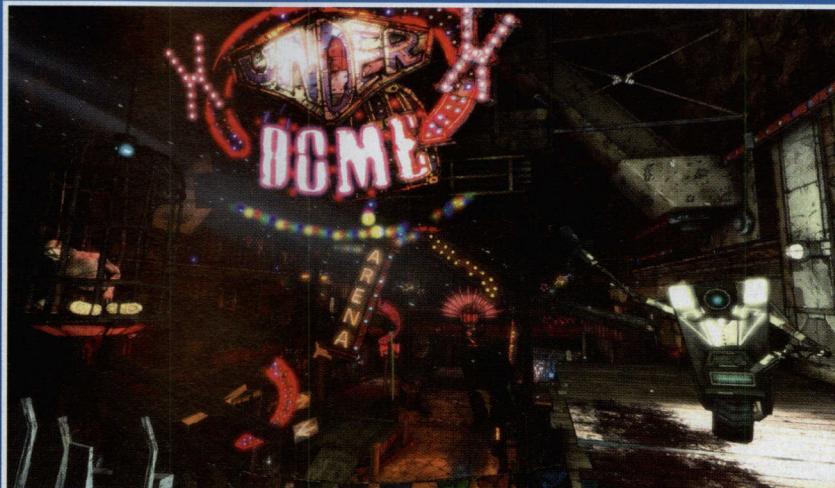
Radically departing from the story-driven narrative of the main game and the debut load of DLC is this arena-battle chapter. There's no real solid story, just that the titular Mad Moxxi is looking for another husband so decides to pit waves and waves of enemies against whoever dares enter. It doesn't really matter as the focus is on combat in this *Mad Max* pastiche.

Newbies need not apply, both because you need to have access to the fast travel network, and also because it's hard. It's harder than if diamond and Kevlar had an offspring, and coated it in nails. We can't recommend playing this unless you've hit level 50 and have a couple of friends willing to go toe-to-toe with the psychos that come at you in each of the arenas. Even with just one partner it's nearly impossible, and attempting it in single player is for shut-ins only.

While the point of, or at least fun in, *Borderlands* was based on killing foes for XP, you don't get that here and the loot you do get is pitiful compared to roaming the landscape hunting for weapons. Instead, it's all about enduring waves of enemies as the round conditions change at Moxxi's whim.

Sometimes gravity will lessen, or you and enemies will move at supersonic speed. Other times you do massive damage with sniper rifles, or have to get critical hits. The conditions stack up, so it pays to have a range of weapons available.

Ultimately though, it's hard to recommend – which is a shame. It's a cool concept, but since the rewards are so few and the pain you have to go through to finish even the first arena is so great (truly, set aside an hour at least just for this) it means Moxxi may be a spinster forever more. **Paul Taylor**



VERDICT:

Messy. A cool concept marred by being too hard for its own good, plus the rewards don't match the effort involved. Bit of a letdown, really.

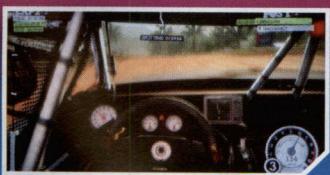
BEST GAMES TO PLAY ONLINE

Enemy AI making you yawn? Feel like conquering the world? Take your skills online with this trio



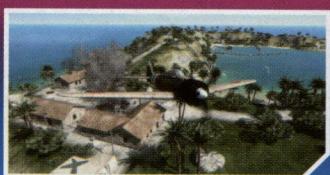
MODERN WARFARE 2

Once you have a good connection, this is an undisputable gem. It just keeps on giving, and the pool of quality players just keeps growing.



COLIN MCRAE DIRT 2

Take it at face value and this is a load of fun. The netcode's robust, and offers arcade thrills with a simple levelling system.



BATTLEFIELD 1943

Super-addictive and super-easy to drop in to a game. An example of doing things the simple way is sometimes the best.

DARKSIDERS BOSS GUIDE

"Something, something, Darkside..."



Playing Darksiders on normal difficulty shouldn't give you folks much hassle. However, if you're economically trying to score all of the "finish the game on x difficulty" Trophies in one fell swoop (by jumping straight in and playing it on Armageddon difficulty), you may just get your arse kicked. Luckily, we've had our arses pre-kicked much earlier on, and we can offer you sage advice on how to best the baddest bosses in the game.

QUEEN TIAMAT

Phase 1:

Initially, Tiamat will take flight and fly about the outside section of the stage and heave fireballs at you. Fiery death can be avoided by a well-timed dash, and you'll usually need to do it three times. Tiamat will then stop moving for a few seconds, which is your cue to grab one of the inert bombs (y'know, the red balls of explosive snot) so that you can throw it at her. You must then use your Crossblade to target first fire, then Tiamat's bomb to make her drop to the rooftop. When this happens, get out Chaoeseater and get stabby. Über stabby.

Phase 2:

Pissed off with the beating, Tiamat will then resume her flying pattern. Rather than hawk lit loogies at you she'll try swooping at you instead. Dash to the side, rinse, repeat. After she makes three unsuccessful swoops she'll pause for a breather. Do exactly what you did before.

Phase 3:

Tiamat will then land on the roof a start stomping around. Use the lock-on feature to keep an eye on her, and to keep some distance. If you move in too close you'll earn a big scratch in the face or she'll launch into the air and land on your head. Conversely, if you stay too far away you'll need dodge a cluster of four fireballs. Wait until Tiamat charges at you, wait until the Quick-Time event makes you mash a button to punch her back. Once she's down get in there and chop up a storm. Keep this up and you'll eventually trigger an end cinematic that features a touching, heart-to-gauntlet discussion between War and Tiamat.



GIANT CRYSTAL SPIDER

Spiders. Why did it have to be spiders? What you need to do is wait until this hideous monstrosity rears back and tries to inhale you. Once that happens, use your Abyssal Chain to grab a body dangling from the roof, and pelt it into the hideous maw. As the spider chows down, run around behind it and, well, punch it in the arse with your Tremor Gauntlet to crack away its crystal armour.

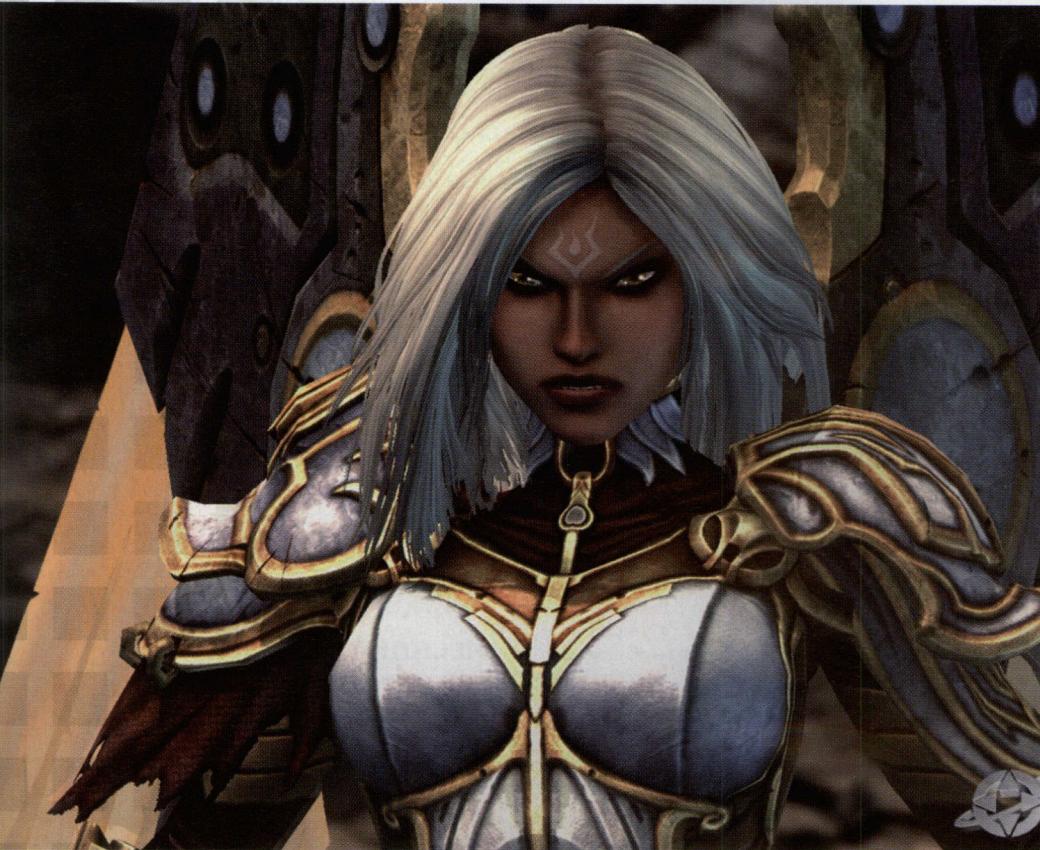
That's your weak-spot, right there. Now you need to used timed jumps to avoid flash wave stomping attacks using timed jumps. Wait until it tries to suck you in again. Do what you did before, and slash that weak-point until it's cactus.

SILITHA

Silithia will spend most of the fight teleporting about the stage and trying to catch you off guard with melee attacks. Watch her fake teleport twice or so, and then use your Abyssal Chain to grab her when she pauses for a second. When you get into face range, just smash her with your favourite air combo. Keep doing this until she collapses, at which point you should get in close with the Chaoeseater again. Once enough pain has been delivered, Silithia will take to the ceiling. Several grapple points appear, grab one, and swing up into her to trigger your victory cinematic.

URIEL

Don't let the heavenly wings fool you, Uriel is a badass. Get in close early on and dish out only a few swings of a combo so that you can dash out of range when she retaliates – which she will, and hard. Do this for long enough and Uriel will take to the skies and unleash a storm of dropping swords. To predict how to dodge them; watch for the blue glowing spots on the ground and dash accordingly. Stick and jab, bob and weave through the swords, then resume what you were doing before. When you have dealt out enough pain you'll get a cutscene.



STRAGA

It's time to put those portal skills to use, Sneaky McTeleporter. While Straga is busy monologuing at you, slap a portal on the ground marker to your left. Dodge his first few attacks and wait until he raises his bommy-knocker for a breather. Quickly fire a portal onto the side of this upraised hammer. When he holds the hammer behind his head for a swing, jump into your floor portal to appear behind Straga's head. Hit your action button to make him grovel onto the stage and chop him in the face. After a bit, Straga will summon some minions to kill you. Stick to the extreme left to avoid getting smooshed while you mop them up. Rinse, and repeat the whole process three times.

THE DESTROYER

Phase 1:

Keep your distance from this dragon form as it slashes and charges at you. Summon Ruin and time a decent hit on his side as he's charging to make him trip over. Ride Ruin as close as you can to this fallen dragon's belly, jump off your steed, and get dicing with Chaoeseater. After repeating this process a few times The Destroyer will get stampy in an effort to knock you down, just keep your distance. When that doesn't work the dragon will take to the skies and swoop down to squish you, just stay on Ruin and use his charge to keep yourself ahead of the damage area. Wait until he lands on the ground and continue the original process until a finisher action button pops up.

Phase 2:

In this second phase The Destroyer will return to his humanoid form. Unfortunately this form comes with a ridiculously long sword which dishes out semi-circular horizontal slashes, overhand smashes, and he can belt out homing energy blasts on the ground. Technically you can escape all of these attacks, but you'll need the reflexes of a mongoose. Just like Uriel, you need to get in close, deliver a sensible amount of hits from a combo, and dash the hell out of range. Once you've cleaned his clock for long enough a quick-time action event starts. Button mash like hell to push him back and dish out a heap of damage. After that happens he'll hover out of range and hurl boulders at you, which you should promptly dodge like a ninja. When he lands, watch out for some new moves; a teleport and an devastating uppercut combo. Just keep your wits about you, dodge like a bandit, and watch for those button mashing events. Once you've locked swords (and won) three times The Destroyer will have to rename himself The Destroyed.



THE SABOTEUR

OBTAI ALL THE TOUGHEST PERKS

You should make a special effort to obtain as many of these as early as possible - earning these abilities will make the rest of the game a lot more entertaining. They must be obtain in Bronze, Silver and Gold order. Here are the hardest ones to get.

BRAWLING

Gold - Grim Reaper

Stealth kill five Generals to unlock 'Touch of Death' attack.

Tips: Nazi Generals are scattered across the map. They'll have a permanent yellow circle around them. Sneak up from behind in a disguise, kill him and run away when his guards see you, or take out the guards from afar first. Either way the 'Touch of Death' is awesome. You can stealth kill an enemy in plain sight and walk away before he drops dead.

HARDWARE

Silver - War on Terror

Kill five Terror Squad Nazis, unlock the .44 Pistol in the shop.



Tips: Terror Squad Nazis arrive in half-tracks. Find a turret and get your alarm level up. Kill every Nazi you see and you should manage.

Gold - Paint the Town Red

Destroy a zeppelin and a Wulf tank during the same Nazi Alarm, unlock the Panzershrek in the shop.

Tips: There's a Wulf tank you can hijack at the south east portion of the map. Find Bercy on the map and travel east as far as Sean can go. It's adjacent to no-man's land. Use it to get a bead on a zeppelin to get your wanted level up (you need to facing up a hill) then hop out and blow the tank yourself. It'll respawn where you found it, don't worry.

SNIPING

Gold - Longshot

Score 10 'Double Kills' using a sniper scope, unlock Terror Scoped Rifle in the shop.

Tips: Look for enemies standing around in pairs. Stand close get an angle on them. Aim for the upper torso. The Terror Scoped Rifle is worth it.

EXPLOSIVES

Gold - A Real Hellion

Kill 10 Nazis in 10 seconds with RDX or dynamite, get no knockdowns from explosions.

Tips: Find an enemy outpost that is heavily guarded. Go in disguised and place RDX near or on several targets. Be sure to have 'Plant Sabotage' active and not 'Trigger Explosive'. Once you have placed enough RDX in the area begin triggering the explosives.

DEMOLITIONS

Silver - Mad Bomber

Destroy five Nazi vehicles with dynamite in 300 seconds, unlock RDX in the shop.

Tips: Store a Nazi vehicle in your garage. Request it, explode it, repeat. Cheating, but it works.

Gold - Blockbuster

Destroy three Wulf tanks using RDX or dynamite, unlock Super RDX upgrade.

Tips: Destroy the previous Wulf tank three times, or any other you see parked around, or a stored Wulf tank from your garage.

SABOTAGE

Gold - Urban Renewal

Destroy four Nazi train bridges and planting explosives while disguised is no longer suspicious.

Tips: You'll need the bridge destruction kit you'll get early in Act II. The rest is easy. This Perk is hugely worth it.

MAYHEM

Gold - The Right of Way

Destroy 20 Nazi vehicles with one vehicle, unlock machine-guns on the Aurora.

Tips: Wulf tank. You know the one.

MECHANICS

Silver - Hijacker

Collect every Nazi vehicle, get free vehicle repairs in the garage.

Tips: Just buy this Perk from the store using the 'Luck of the Irish' upgrade.

Gold - Wheelman

Collect and restore all Civilian, Race, and military vehicles, get the ability store armour in the garage.

Tips: Just buy it using the 'St Paddy's Day' upgrade. Now you can store that Wulf tank and order it any time you want.

EVASION

Gold - Europe's Most Wanted

Escape from a level 5 alarm, and now you can use hiding places at Alarm levels 4 and 5.

Tips: Escape on foot to the well in the countryside to the north. Just stay out of sight, check your map.

TROPHY HUNTER

Looking for gold, silver, and bronze in your favourite titles? Here are three to grab in *Borderlands*

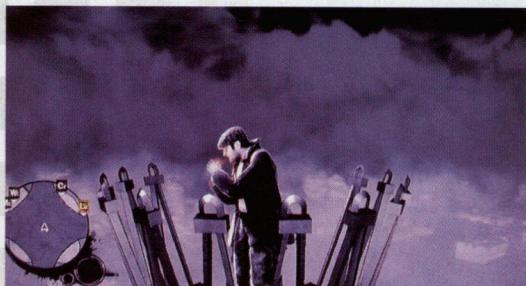


1.21 GIGAWATTS

If you were born after the '80s, we feel sorry for you, as this trophy is a homage to Doc Brown from *Back to the Future*. Fairly straight forward: simply zap 25 enemies to death using a shock weapon. A rifle or SMG is your best bet to get there in 'lightning' quick time.

7 THINGS TO DO IN... THE SABOTEUR

We've been addicted to liberating Paris from the grip of Nazi tyranny all month. Here are a few things you must do!



1 SMOKE ATOP A GIANT POLE

Some people, including us, have made the mistake of climbing the Eiffel Tower in *The Saboteur*. It's possible, but unnecessary. There are elevators. At any rate, get to the top and you'll be treated to a great, if a little cloudy, view of the city of love. Not even zeppelins cruise this high.



4 DON'T HAVE A COW, MAN

If you're wondering whether or not you can actually plant explosive charges on cows in *The Saboteur*, wonder no more. You can. Best of all, they don't even mind. They just stand, feasting on grass, while you strap a wad of RDX to their tasty torsos. Hit the detonator and the whole area will become a BBQ bonanza. There'll be slabs of beef all over the place.



6 LED ZEPPLIN

You'll likely knock down plenty of these over the course of the game, but that doesn't mean you shouldn't try to shoot one down as soon as possible. A Panzershrek will make short work of them, but the AA towers are probably your best bet (they're everywhere, and they don't cost 50 contraband to reload). Shoot one directly above you for the best view.



FENCE

Opportunists, Yuri Orlov fans and hoarders, this is one for you. Find 50 guns and sell them on at any vending machine. It doesn't have to be all at once as that would be inventory-impossible, though once this dings you'll be itching to sell more. Bye-bye social conscience.



2 TANKS FOR THE MEMORIES

Complete enough of the Perks and you'll be able to store German armour in your garage. Combine this with the getaway ability and you'll be able to get a Wulf tank delivered straight to you, when and where you want. It's pretty darn handy, and there's no limit to it. Got a tricky objective coming up? Order a tank to make things easier. A lot easier.



3 HIT THE STAGE

Unless you're blind you'll notice there's always a topless woman singing to a crowd of drunken Nazis in the strip joint you call home. You can't draw a weapon in here, but you can get their attention. Jump up on stage and you'll be met with a chorus of boos and jeers. Try this at your local strip club. You can let us know how it went when you come out of your coma.



5 THE TOUCH OF DEATH

The Touch of Death is the best move in the game, hands down. Unlock it and you'll be able to shank Nazi soldiers in plain sight and walk away before he drops dead. By the time anybody realises you'll be away, stabbing somebody else. Used in conjunction with a stolen uniform you'll be an unstoppable, silent killing machine.



7 NUDITY: ACTIVATE

Each copy of *The Saboteur* requires the nudity to be activated. For new copies it's a free download. Activate it and you'll have something that will annoy the hell out of your sister, girlfriend, mum or wife. Also, you get to see boobs. Win win.



UNITED WE STAND

How hard you have to work for this one depends on whether you play in single player or co-op from the start. Take out the Rakk Hive, the Valut Boss, Sledge, Krom or Flynt in a co-op game for gold. Us? We hammered Sledge, roughly seven hours in, with our brother-in-arms.

INTERMISSION

Blu-ray & DVD

DIRECTOR: DUNCAN JONES | CAST: SAM ROCKWELL, KEVIN SPACEY | AVAILABLE ON: DVD/BLU-RAY

MOON (M)

Sam Bell is nearing the completion of his three-year contract with Lunar Industries, mining Earth's primary source of energy, helium-3, on the dark side of the moon. Longing to return home to his wife Tess (who was heavily pregnant with their daughter at the time he left Earth) and with the base's computer, Gerty, as his only companion, Bell's extended isolation has taken a major toll. However, an accident on the lunar surface leads to an extremely disturbing discovery. As the mystery begins to unravel it becomes clear that not everything is as it seems.

VERDICT:

Intriguing sci-fi with an unexpected twist. Sam Rockwell does a great job, and it's also an impressive directorial debut from Duncan Jones.

8



IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...
2001: A Space Odyssey

Key inspiration for
Moon



SAW VI (R18+)

Director: Kevin Greutert

Cast: Tobin Bell, Costas Mandylor, Mark Rolston

Betsy Russell, Shawnee Smith

Available on: DVD/Blu-ray

Saw VI concludes the "second trilogy" of the series (that focused on the posthumous effects of the Jigsaw Killer and the progression of his successor, Mark Hoffman). It also marks the directorial debut of Kevin Greutert (who served as the editor for all the previous instalments). In the film, Hoffman sets up a new trap for an health insurance executive while the FBI trails the last living Jigsaw accomplice suspect, Peter Strahm. Then a whole bunch of frightened people are hanged, speared, shot, crushed and dissolved.

We certainly admire the success Aussies James Wan and Leigh Whannell have found with this series, but we just don't see where all this is going to end. Are people really fascinated enough with watching people be creatively tortured to death to just keep watching it indefinitely? That's just messed up.

VERDICT:

Surely torture-porn like the *Saw* series has lost its edge by now?

5

VERDICT:

Certainly not worth a purchase, even if you did like the original.

5

SMOKIN' ACES 2: ASSASSIN'S BALL (MA15+)

Director: P.J. Pesce

Cast: Tom Berenger, Ernie Hudson, Vinnie Jones

Available on: DVD/Blu-ray

Director Joe Carnahan (*Narc*, *Smokin' Aces*) has palmed this one off to unknown P.J. Pesce. Pesce is probably used to dealing with low budgets and crafting straight-to-video sequels by now (*From Dusk Till Dawn 3: The Hangman's Daughter*, *The Lost Boys 2: The Tribe* and *Sniper 3* are all his work) – but this doesn't make *Smokin' Aces 2* any good.

This prequel takes the original film's concept of a large group of various assassins all chasing one target, with the FBI fully aware of the situation and doing what they can to stop them. Unfortunately, the low cost look and feel is tough to ignore, and it feels like the plot gets additionally complicated towards the end for no other reason than to confuse everybody.

THE RED BARON (M)

Director: Nikolai Müllerschön

Cast: Matthias Schweighöfer, Til Schweiger, Lena Headey, Joseph Fiennes

Available on: DVD/Blu-ray

Aces of aces Baron Manfred von Richthofen is the most feared and celebrated pilot of the entire German air force in World War I. To him and his fellow wingmen, air combat is a sporting affair – events of technical challenge and honour, ignoring the terrible extent of war. Unfortunately, after falling in love with a beautiful nurse, Käte, Manfred realises he's being used as a propaganda tool. Caught between his disgust for the war and the responsibility for his squadron, he sets out to fly again. It's surprising a film commemorating a German war hero got off the ground in Deutschland, but what's more surprising is how little connection the film has with historical events. He's arguably the most famous fighter ace ever. If you need to jazz up his story, you're probably telling it wrong.

VERDICT:

Awesome dogfighting, but it yaws a little too far from the facts to fully engage.

6



SORORITY ROW (MA15+)

Director: Stewart Hendler

Cast: Rumer Willis, Carrie Fisher, Audrina Patridge, Jamie Chung

Available on: DVD/Blu-ray

When a bunch of college girls decide to play a morbid practical joke on a cheating guy (by faking a girl's death), things don't go too well. Before you can say, "I know what you did last summer" she's stabbed with a tyre iron and killed. For real this time. Keen to cover up these shenanigans the surviving sisters and their male accomplice agree to dump the body and never speak of the incident again. Just after graduation, however, a mysterious killer begins stalking them all. It's a slasher film, so expect the cast to be outnumbered by a big pile of blonde corpses by the end.

VERDICT:

You could just watch the trailer instead, it covers the whole story anyway.

5

COUPLES RETREAT (M)

Director: Peter Billingsley

Cast: Vince Vaughn, Jason Bateman, Jon Favreau, Malin Ackerman, Kristin Davis, Kristen Bell, Faizon Love, Kali Hawk, Jean Reno

Available on: DVD/Blu-ray

When four couples embark on a journey to a tropical island resort, things don't go quite as planned. While one couple is there to work on their marriage, the other three set out to enjoy some fun in the sun. Unfortunately, when they discover that participation in the resort's couples therapy is not optional their group-rate vacation suddenly takes a turn. Unfortunately it's not a very entertaining one. It's hard to pinpoint why this went wrong with the talented cast involved, but it's simply just not funny enough.

VERDICT:

Come on, these guys did *Swingers* for crying out loud. Not good enough.

4

SURROGATES (M)

Director: Jonathan Mostow

Cast: Bruce Willis, Radha Mitchell, Rosamund Pike, Ving Rhames

Available on: DVD/Blu-ray

In the near future people are living their lives remotely from the safety of their own homes via robotic surrogates. These surrogates are physically perfect mechanical representations of themselves. It's an ideal world where crime, pain, fear and consequences don't exist. However, when the first murder in years sends shockwaves through the community, FBI agent Greer (Bruce Willis, and robot Bruce Willis in a LEGO man wig) discovers a vast conspiracy and must abandon his own surrogate, risking his actual life to unravel the mystery. We're sure the Wachowskis' fingers were hovering above their lawyer's speed dial when they heard about this one.

VERDICT:

Gets the job done, but hardly worth a second watch. Surprisingly short too.

6

DIRECTORS: MARK NEVELDINE, BRIAN TAYLOR | **CAST:** GERARD BUTLER, MICHAEL C. HALL | **AVAILABLE ON:** DVD/BLU-RAY

GAMER (MA15+)

Set in a future-world where humans can control other humans (thanks to nanites in the brain) in mass-scale, multiplayer online gaming environments, *Gamer* is pretty silly. When star player and death-row inmate Kable (Butler) from a game called "Slayers" (which is exactly what it sounds like) is given the chance to escape, take down the game's mastermind and prove his innocence, he takes it. Cue low budget action.

VERDICT:

Dumb as a bag of hammers; it's satire, but it's not smart satire. Will satisfy slightly drunk action fans, but don't expect too much.

6

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...
Crank

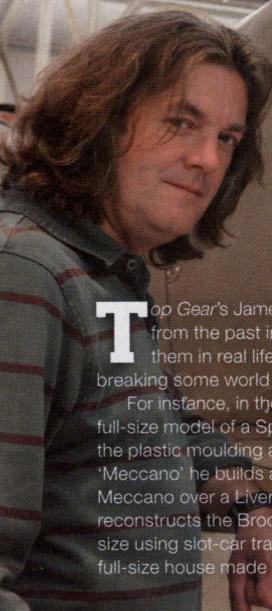
Because it's the other movie these directors made

INTERMISSION

Blu-ray & DVD

DIRECTORS: PAUL BULLER, ALEXANDER DUNLOP, GRAHAM STRONG | CAST: JAMES MAY, TIFF NEEDELL | AVAILABLE ON: DVD

JAMES MAY'S TOY STORIES (TBC)



Top Gear's James May brings favourite toys from the past into the modern era, and uses them in real life large scale enterprises – breaking some world records in the process. For instance, in the episode 'Airfix' he builds a full-size model of a Spitfire WWII fighter plane, using the plastic moulding and assembly technique. In 'Meccano' he builds a full-size footbridge out of Meccano over a Liverpool canal, in 'Scalextric' he reconstructs the Brooklands racing circuit in full-size using slot-car track and in 'LEGO' he builds a full-size house made of LEGO bricks.

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...
James May's 20th Century

Because James May is rad

VERDICT:
Infectious and entertaining. Seeing all these classic toys taken to such grand scales is a real hoot. Totally recommended.

8



CLARKSON SHOOT-OUT (G)

Director: Richard Heeley
Cast: Jeremy Clarkson
Available on: DVD

Shoot-Out is one of Jeremy Clarkson's older TV specials, dating back to 2003. That means it's not entirely that relevant anymore. It normally doesn't matter, however, as Top Gear and Clarkson's other TV specials are almost always creative and quirky enough to entertain years down the track. *Shoot-Out*, surprisingly, not so much.

Clarkson does, at one point, tow a caravan at high-speeds with an Overfinch Land Rover. The gimmick? The caravan is upside down. The rest of the video is made up from a bit too much spinning out. It's good enough, and it's packed with plenty of precious metal (like the Vauxhall VX220 Turbo, the Aston Martin DB7 GT and many more) but it's missing some spark.

VERDICT:
Lacking a lot of the substance *Top Gear* and his other TV specials have.

6

SCRUBS: THE COMPLETE EIGHTH SEASON (M)

Directors: Various
Cast: Zach Braff, Sarah Chalke, Donald Faison, John C. McGinley, Judy Reyes, Neil Flynn, Ken Jenkins, Courteney Cox, Elizabeth Banks
Available on: DVD

Another awesome season of one of the better sitcoms around. Pay particular attention for the episode full of Sesame Street cameos – it's hilarious (and kind of heartbreaking, as usual).

Some of the cost-cutting measures begin to become visible, like key cast members being away for up to three episodes over the course of the season, but it's a great final season for a great show. Except that it isn't. They're now making another season, but replacing most of the cast. Sigh.

VERDICT:
Get season one through to eight and call it quits. Another one bites the dust.

8

NASH BRIDGES - THE FIRST SEASON (TBC)

Directors: Various
Cast: Don Johnson, Cheech Marin
Available on: DVD

Nash Bridges is a pretty routine cop show, but it was helped greatly by its cast and location. Don Johnson is fine as Nash, but it's the supporting cast that deserve a nod. Cheech Marin, in particular, plays a great sidekick. Marin and Johnson have great on-screen chemistry. San Francisco is a great city for a show also – it's such an interesting place.

About the only thing we remembered about *Nash Bridges* was that Don Johnson was reportedly boning Jody O'Keefe (who played his on-screen daughter) at the time – which is kinda weird. Other than that, we'd forgotten about it. We could still take it or leave it, but it's simple and easy to consume.

VERDICT:
You'd have to be a massive fan to run out and buy it, but it's easy to watch.

6



BLEACH THE MOVIE 2: THE DIAMONDDUST REBELLION (M)

Director: Noriyuki Abe

Cast: Akira Ishida, Masakazu Morita, Romi Paku
Available on: DVD

The long-running manga series *Bleach* has a minor PR issue. The demon-fighting high-schooler Ichigo Kurosaki may be the protagonist, but fan poll after fan poll points to the guy whose sword can turn into an ice dragon as being the most popular. So how do you reconcile that disparity in a motion picture? Simple: create a non-canonical yarn which ties the fates of the two together.

VERDICT:

Basically one long fight scene. Will make zero sense if you haven't seen the series.

5



BLADE OF THE IMMORTAL - VOL. 1 (TBC)

Director: Koichi Mashimo

Cast: Tomokazu Seki, Rina Satou

Available on: DVD

Manji's got a problem: he can't die. A swordsman living in feudal Japan, his follies have left him wracked by guilt – and he's sworn to slay 1000 villains to make amends, in the hope of ending his torment. Lucky for him, a spunky 16-year-old samurai bird wants to hire him for some extreme vengeance. And considering the size of the private army of criminal deviants who offed her old man, Manji could fill his quota before he knows it. Lacks the exquisite linework of the original manga by Hiroaki Samura, but more than makes up for it in gore.

VERDICT:

Bloody, cheesy, and as mental as anything.

7



HALO LEGENDS (TBC)

Director: Various

Cast: Andy McAvin

Available on: DVD/Blu-ray

You'll recall that there were two difference sequels to *The Matrix*. First there were the live action movies made by the Wachowski Brothers – over-produced cock-ups that only left the fans angry and confused. Then there was *The Animatrix*; an anthology of short films by the very best anime directors. *The Animatrix* was weird, and uneven, and a bit hit and miss – but it dared to do something imaginative with the franchise, and served to enrich the universe of *The Matrix* in a way its creators couldn't... or wouldn't. *Halo Legends* works the same magic on the popular FPS. It's an odd mix, with drama, tragedy, balls-out violence, and even comedy, plus enough back-story to bring you up to speed, even if you've never played *Halo* in your life.

VERDICT:

Leave the console wars behind and this anime mash-up may rock your world.

8

DIRECTOR: MASAHIRO ANDO | **CAST:** TOMOYA NAGASE, YURI CHINEN, KOICHI YAMADERA, NAOTO TAKENAKA | **AVAILABLE ON:** DVD/BLU-RAY

SWORD OF THE STRANGER (MA15+)

A ripping yarn – with oodles of guts and blood. It concerns a wandering ronin, an Eastwood-esque Man With No Name, who hires out his samurai sword to an impetuous youth fleeing a drug-fueled international conspiracy. Finely crafted both in story and animation, the multi-layered plot is fine-tuned to deliver duel after duel, and spectacle after spectacle. Witness as samurai bad-asses torture, betray, double-cross, and triple-cross their way to a climax of bloody dismemberment. Top-notch animation, too – those who wish to fully savour the exquisitely choreographed fight scenes may wish to buy the Blu-ray edition.

VERDICT:

Samurai vs. Kung-Fu, in a sword-and-sorcery slugfest! It also has a cool story, bro. Watch it now.

9

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...
Samurai Champloo

Top-tier swordfighting action

CINEMAS

DIRECTOR: PAUL GREENGRASS

CAST: MATT DAMON, GREG KINNEAR, AMY RYAN

IN CINEMAS: MARCH 11



GREEN ZONE (M)

March 2003. The US has just begun its invasion of Iraq in its hunt for Saddam Hussein and weapons of mass destruction. A month later, Chief (Damon) and his team are investigating a site where some WMDs are apparently located. Of course, as we know, there were as many WMDs in Iraq as there are screen doors on submarines. Questioning the reliable source of intelligence he's getting, Chief is approached by a CIA operative who suggests he digs a little deeper.

Even if you've had your head in the sand or vampire culture for the last seven years you'll still get a lot out of *Green Zone*, though you'll appreciate it more if you do know a touch about the second Iraq War. There are more and more films

being released that have the Iraq war as their central premise, and Greengrass has used his latest to create a myth about the source of the info regarding the fabled WMDs.

Despite stretching the premise that one soldier could find the truth out about WMDs, as well as a few other flaws, this is fast paced, popcorn action with hints of Bourne throughout, as the internal agencies running the war bicker. No surprise, as Greengrass and Damon worked together on the second and third Bourne films, and they were brilliant. *Green Zone* is less so, as it copies more than it innovates, but really that doesn't matter. The final chase scene will leave you breathless. A worthy way to spend a couple of hours at the movies.

THE BUZZ

What's really going on behind-the-scenes

Judging the success of *Avatar* – which at time of writing had taken \$1.3 billion worldwide – we can expect to see more movies with an extra dimension, both on the silver screen and at home. There are, however, hidden dangers.

A 42-year-old Taiwanese man died after watching James Cameron's latest blockbuster in 3D. The man,

known only as Kuo, suffered from hypertension and it's being alleged the excitement of the movie possibly contributed to his brain haemorrhaging and him having a stroke 11 days later.

Sufferers of minor eye problems should also be aware, though it's highly unlikely you're going to be afflicted with death. The mental process required

to watch a 3D movie is more intense, the brain struggles, potentially causing headaches.

If your depth perception ability is wonky, it's also possible that you just won't be able to watch 3D movies at all, as you're looking at 'virtual' objects, rather than the real thing. So, the question is, 2D or not 2D?

ALSO IN CINEMAS

The Hurt Locker (MA15+)

Director: Kathryn

Bigelow

Cast: Jeremy Renner, Anthony Mackie, Brian Geraghty, Ralph Fiennes, Guy Pearce

An exceptional film focused on an elite three-man bomb squad in the war-torn Baghdad, this is a story about lives in combat, teamwork, and trying to keep a cool head when each job could cost you your life.

The team's new leader, James (Renner) is a man living on the edge, thriving in what he does at the expense of Sanborn (Mackie) and Eldridge (Geraghty) who just want to get through their last few days of duty.

It could be any war these guys are in, as you don't have to concern yourself about the 'good guys' winning the fight. While it's packed full of exhausting action, it's primarily about the characters. Destined to be a future classic.

Shutter Island (MA15+)

Director: Martin

Scorsese

Cast: Leonardo DiCaprio, Mark Ruffalo, Ben Kingsley, Michelle Williams

Set in 1954, two US Marshals are sent to an island housing the criminally insane to find a missing woman who just seemed to vanish. A taught, suspenseful mystery from a master director, where the journey counts as much as the final reveal.





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FACE THE
CONSEQUENCES

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INDEX

All the games that matter on PS3!

THE BEST PSN GAMES

Buy and play in your home!

BRAID

DEVELOPER: Hothead
PLAYERS: 1

A charming platformer that incorporates one of last decade's most used mechanics – time manipulation – whilst wrapped up in gorgeous graphics. And, it was all made by one man. Buy it.

WIPEOUT HD

DEVELOPER: SCE
PLAYERS: 1-8

Yes, it's a HD remix of tracks from the PSP versions, but HD is too sublime to ignore. Utterly gorgeous, running at a blistering framerate and handles superbly. Mandatory.

EVERYDAY SHOOTER

DEVELOPER: Queasy Games
PLAYERS: 1

Don't be fooled by the sparse art style. This cunningly blends music in with the action that turns it from a dual-stick shooting whimsy into a highly addictive blaster.

FLOWER

DEVELOPER: thatgamecompany
PLAYERS: 1

High concept and totally pretty, it plays like a dream. Guide petals on the wind using the motion-sensing of your DualShock 3. You will be amazed.

MARVEL VS CAPCOM 2

DEVELOPER: Capcom
PLAYERS: 1-2

It's by no means 'straight' Street Fighter, and nor should it. Stuffed with 56 characters, this three-on-three brawler is a visual and aural explosion. The HD treatment is superbly done.

BC REARMED

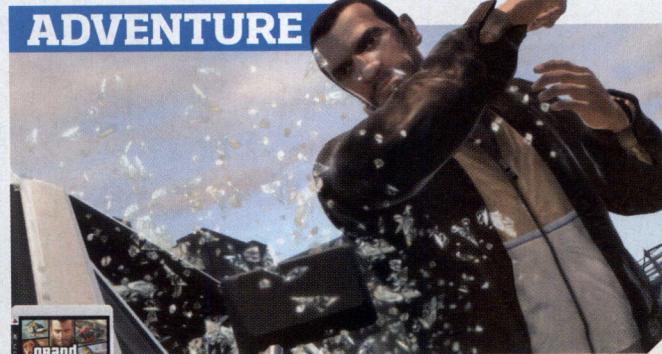
DEVELOPER: GRIN
PLAYERS: 1

Bionic Commando Rearmed is a prime example of what many love about the PSN: being a platform for updates of classics. It's pure gameplay – and rock hard.

SIMPLY THE BEST...

The best of the best of the best of the best

ADVENTURE



GRAND THEFT AUTO IV

"GTAIV is a game 10 out of 10 was designed for – a game that takes your rising, constantly spiralling expectations and vapourises them with a product so sublime you'll tell your grandkids about it."

DEVELOPER: Rockstar North PUBLISHER: Rockstar PLAYERS: 1-16

10



UNCHARTED 2: AMONG THIEVES



"Easily the best PS3 exclusive to date, *Uncharted 2* combines genre-defining visuals, high adventure and cinematic intensity like nothing before. Don't miss the original either. Get both, this second."

DEVELOPER: Naughty Dog
PUBLISHER: Sony
PLAYERS: 1-12

10



BAYONETTA

"It takes balls to make a game this violent, sexy, and weird. It takes skill to make it so well, and it takes a Japanese mindset to make it so freakishly perverted. Smooth and stylish: the ultimate evolution of Devil May Cry style action."



ASSASSIN'S CREED II

"A far more compelling story than the revolutionary original, there's more to see and do, and more ways of dealing death than before. Ubisoft has tweaked the climbing mechanic to make it feel part puzzler, but all action."

DEVELOPER: Platinum Games
PUBLISHER: Sega
PLAYERS: 1

9



BRÜTAL LEGEND

"A hilarious and engaging story in an amazing heavy metal world. The funniest game of 2009, with an absolutely killer soundtrack to boot. If God gave rock 'n' roll to us then it is settled: Tim Schafer is God. A true must-play."

DEVELOPER: Double Fine
PUBLISHER: EA
PLAYERS: 1-4

9



DEVELOPER: Ubisoft Montreal
PUBLISHER: Ubisoft
PLAYERS: 1

9



MGS4: GUNS OF THE PATRIOTS

"An incredibly layered gaming experience that is almost inexhaustible. One of the best games available on the PlayStation 3, and definitely one of the top exclusives. Buy and play this videogame now. Seriously."

DEVELOPER: Kojima Productions
PUBLISHER: Namco Bandai Partners
PLAYERS: 1-16

10



DRAGON AGE: ORIGINS

"The good utterly outweighs the bad. It's daunting, but with such masterful storytelling, memorable characters and addictive adventuring, every hour invested is paid back double. Plus, BioWare swapped 'morality meters' for shagging."

DEVELOPER: Bioware
PUBLISHER: EA
PLAYERS: 1

9



FALLOUT 3

"Taking the solid base of Oblivion and placing it into a post apocalyptic wasteland always sounded like a great idea – and *Fallout 3* proves that concept brilliantly. This is a game that will astound you with the sheer depth and enormity of its incredible vision."

DEVELOPER: Bethesda
PUBLISHER: Atari
PLAYERS: 1

9

90 PlayStation | March | 2010

SHOOTER



THE CHRONICLES OF RIDDICK: ASSAULT ON DARK ATHENA

"Worth your sweat. The combination of two campaigns equals a respectable 20+ hours of gameplay."

DEVELOPER: Starbreeze Studios
PUBLISHER: Namco Bandai Partners **PLAYERS:** 1-12

8



KILLZONE 2

"Visually *Killzone 2* runs through the competition like a bull in the proverbial china shop. Lucky then, that the game's design and story matches the lofty production values. *Killzone 2* is the first-person shooter evolved."

DEVELOPER: Guerrilla
PUBLISHER: Sony
PLAYERS: 1-16

10



MODERN WARFARE 2

"It's almost like three games in one, stuffed with moments that will leave you shocked and breathless with excitement. Superbly crafted, *MW2* is, with its older brother, a pinnacle of this generation's games."

DEVELOPER: Infinity Ward **PUBLISHER:** Activision **PLAYERS:** 1-18

10



IL-2 STURMOVIK: BIRDS OF PREY

"It's not an FPS, but shooting is all you do – in the skies above Europe. Head-turning attention to detail and intense action. Awesome, actually."

DEVELOPER: Gaijin Entertainment **PUBLISHER:** AIE **PLAYERS:** 1-16

9



BORDERLANDS

"*Borderlands* starts out great and only gets better from there. It takes the best elements of RPGs and shooters and fuses them, and it's quite simply the most rewarding co-op to date."

DEVELOPER: Gearbox Software **PUBLISHER:** 2K **PLAYERS:** 1-4

9



CALL OF DUTY: WORLD AT WAR

"Superior in many ways to even *Modern Warfare*, this is a surprisingly superlative piece of software. Powerful, well-produced, stuffed with violence – it's fantastic. The action is relentless, the visuals buttery-smooth, the intensity savage – we love it."

DEVELOPER: Treyarch
PUBLISHER: Activision
PLAYERS: 1-16

10



GHOST-BUSTERS

"Well-honed and accessible controls, some spectacular visual effects, excellent pace, great level design, incredible attention to detail – all of these essential traits combined with the *Ghostbusters* universe and come together for a thoroughly addictive experience."

DEVELOPER: Terminal Reality
PUBLISHER: Sony
PLAYERS: 1-4

9



FAR CRY 2

"At times overstretching itself, *Far Cry 2*'s breath-taking ambition can often be its undoing, but it's still one of the best shooters out there. Plus, setting stuff on fire is still a ridiculous amount of fun."

DEVELOPER: Ubisoft Montreal
PUBLISHER: Ubisoft
PLAYERS: 1-16

8

TOP 5

GAMES TALKING ABOUT GAMES



ASSASSIN'S CREED II

A horse ride out of town and Ezio's rolled up to his uncle's villa. As they greet each other, uncle says in his most convincing accent, "It's me, Mario!" No Luigi, though.



GTA III

Claude's on a mission called 'Two Faced Tanner' given to him by Yakuza mistress Asuka. The aim: kill one of their drivers who is a 'strangely animated undercover cop'. An unsble dig at *Driver*.



DRIV3R

Revenge! Tanner's given the chance to kill 10 men called Timmy Vermicelli, who all wore Hawaiian shirts and floaties. Why? Vice City's Tommy Vercetti would die as soon as he touched the wet stuff.



GTA SAN ANDREAS

Payback. As CJ sneaks into Madd Dogg's mansion, Dogg's playing a game, cursing "How come Refractions messed up so bad? Tanner you suck ass!" A nod to the bug-riddled *Driv3r*.



BRAID

Within the first 10 minutes of play and clearing a level, a wooden dinosaur rolls out of a stone building and says, "Your princess is in another castle." Classic Mario.

INDEX

All the games that matter on PS3!

THE BEST PSP GAMES

Small system.
Big games.

LITTLEBIGPLANET

DEVELOPER: SCE Cambridge
PUBLISHER: Sony
PLAYERS: 1

Retaining all of the fun of one of the PS3's most entertaining platformers, this version sacrifices little on the transition to the small screen. Incredibly deep, engaging – and fun.

MH: FREEDOM UNITE

DEVELOPER: Capcom
PUBLISHER: THQ
PLAYERS: 1-4

Monster Hunter is a system seller in native Japan, and it deserves that accolade here. It's an adventure game to lose your life to, and rewards in spades if you're able to put the effort in.

WIPEOUT PULSE

DEVELOPER: SCE Liverpool
PUBLISHER: Sony
PLAYERS: 1-8

Its predecessor, *Pure*, laid the groundwork. It's not that this does much that differently, it just does it better. Beautifully animated and weighted just right, it's a futurist's dream come true.

GTA CHINATOWN WARS

DEVELOPER: Rockstar Leeds
PUBLISHER: Rockstar
PLAYERS: 1

Hilarious. Violent. Addictive. Yes, it's a port of a DS title, but it's a port done right, and still it rebels against the style of other GTA games. A tightly scripted, mature and entertaining package.

MGS: PORTABLE OPS

DEVELOPER: Kojima Productions
PUBLISHER: Mindscape
PLAYERS: 1

As a chapter in an epic story that's kept PlayStation fans rapt for more than a decade, this is essential. As an adventure game in its own right, it's bliss. A fine action title, no matter what.

SOULCALIBUR

DEVELOPER: Namco Bandai
PUBLISHER: Ubisoft
PLAYERS: 1-2

Yes, it's even better than *Tekken*. Beautiful to look at and easy to pick up and play, it also has *God of War*'s Kratos as a playable character. Brimming with unlockables, it's a classic.

RACING



PURE

"*Pure* shot straight from nowhere to rub *MotorStorm*'s face in its glorious graphics and watertight gameplay. It's not as varied as its main competitor, but damn does it play well."

DEVELOPER: Black Rock PUBLISHER: Madman PLAYERS: 1-16

9



GRAN TURISMO 5: PROLOGUE

"An anemic game package that somehow survives by being what is quite possibly the greatest example of audio-visual excellence on the PlayStation 3 thus far. Well worth checking out."

DEVELOPER: Polyphony Digital
PUBLISHER: Sony
PLAYERS: 1-16

8



SEGA RALLY

"To appreciate *Sega Rally* you'll have to continually remind yourself that it's a deceptively life-like caricature of a hardcore rallying experience. Not brain surgery, but it delivers the fun in big muddy spades."

DEVELOPER: Sega Driving Studio
PUBLISHER: Sega
PLAYERS: 1-6

9



COLIN MCRAE: DIRT

"*Dirt* 2 is snazzy, but it's too boneheaded for its own good, has few real rally cars and very little proper rallying. The original *Dirt* remains a far better example of a next gen rally game. More varied and far less US-centric."

DEVELOPER: Codemasters
PUBLISHER: Namco Bandai Partners
PLAYERS: 1-16

9



RACE DRIVER: GRID

"This bastard rock n' roll son of V8 Supercars and *Colin McRae: DIRT* is hot. Your lower jaw will relax. Your eyelids will take five. And you'll start to drool. Shame it ditched its roots though, and the V8 DLC Codes promised has vanished."

DEVELOPER: Codemasters
PUBLISHER: Namco Bandai Partners
PLAYERS: 1-12

9



NEED FOR SPEED SHIFT

"*Shift* bucks the trend of all-American games, and treats you as an intelligent racer. Whether you want to get under the bonnet and tinker, or even just race with what you're given, this truly is a must-have package. It's also damn pretty and very, very noisy."

DEVELOPER: Black Box
PUBLISHER: EA
PLAYERS: 1-8

9



MOTORSTORM

"In our humble opinion *MotorStorm* was the best launch title on the fledgling PS3 – and arguably it's one of the greatest launch titles of all time. Defining next-gen racing as a platform upon which smart AI and terrain deformation could thrive, *MotorStorm* reinvented the arcade racer."

DEVELOPER: Evolution Studios
PUBLISHER: Sony
PLAYERS: 1-16

10



MIDNIGHT CLUB: LOS ANGELES

"Within its niche subgenre, *MC: LA* reigns supreme. Well designed, rolling objectives, and an insane amount of customisation, *MC: LA* manages to rise above the rabble, easily beating off *Need for Speed Undercover* at its own game."

DEVELOPER: Rockstar San Diego
PUBLISHER: Rockstar
PLAYERS: 1-16

7



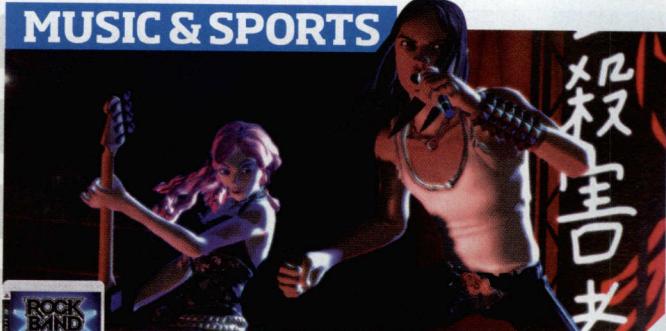
BURNOUT PARADISE

"You'll lament the thoughtless removal of splitscreen and the lack of a retry button, but you'll marvel at the slick frame rate, the sun drenched city, and Criterion's stellar commitment to free downloadable content. Awesome."

DEVELOPER: Criterion
PUBLISHER: EA
PLAYERS: 1-16

9

MUSIC & SPORTS



ROCK BAND

"A triumph. Harmonix has found the formula for a truly great music game – immaculate presentation, great tunes and a job for as many of your friends as possible. You wanted the best, you got the best."

DEVELOPER: Harmonix **PUBLISHER:** EA **PLAYERS:** 1-4



THE BEATLES: ROCK BAND

"From the tunes to screaming hordes of women to psychedelic trips through acid-fuelled imaginations, Harmonix nailed it all. A landmark collaboration."

DEVELOPER: Harmonix
PUBLISHER: EA
PLAYERS: 1-4

9

SKATE 2

"Despite some frame rate issues, SKATE 2 is undoubtedly one of the greatest sports games ever conceived. The controls are flawless, the city is dense, the balance is sublime. Massively addictive."

DEVELOPER: EA Black Box
PUBLISHER: EA
PLAYERS: 1-8

9



FIFA 10

"With its new momentum physics, stellar visuals, and engaging gameplay, 2009 was the year that the *FIFA* franchise managed to leap the perennial hurdle that is *Pro Evolution Soccer*. *FIFA 10* is even better. Buy it, become obsessed."

DEVELOPER: EA Canada
PUBLISHER: EA
PLAYERS: 1-20

9



FIGHT NIGHT ROUND 4

"A spectacular game. Deeper and more technical, *Fight Night Round 4* recreates the sweet science more faithfully than ever before. Remarkable detail, incredible animation."

DEVELOPER: EA Canada
PUBLISHER: EA
PLAYERS: 1-2

9



STREET FIGHTER IV

"Capcom has been in the virtual brawling business longer than anyone, and with its vibrant look, online mode and pristine gameplay, *SFIV* is worth paying double for. Acquire on sight."

DEVELOPER: Capcom **PUBLISHER:** THQ **PLAYERS:** 1-2

10



UFC 2009 UNDISPUTED

"It was trumped by *Fight Night Round 4*, but it's taken the arrival of *WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2010* to remind us just how tight *UFC 2009* really is. A technical, rewarding fighter that looks bloody unreal."

DEVELOPER: Yuke's
DISTRIBUTOR: THQ
PLAYERS: 1-2

8



GUITAR HERO METALLICA

"*Guitar Hero Metallica* improves upon *GHWT* in a number ways – a more user-friendly HUD, superior presentation and more attention to detail. Great tracklist too, including 'Tuesday's Gone' by Lynyrd Skynyrd."

DEVELOPER: Neversoft
DISTRIBUTOR: Activision
PLAYERS: 1-4

8



VIRTUA TENNIS 2009

"More of a tweak than a brand new experience, *Virtua Tennis 2009* is still the most enjoyable tennis game available today. Along with player creation tools, the biggest plus is the chance to play in the Davis Cup."

DEVELOPER: Sumo
DISTRIBUTOR: SEGA
PLAYERS: 1-4

8



DJ HERO

"A real surprise package, and tough to write off as a gimmick once you've played it. Utterly addictive, and great value when you consider it's chock full of great mixes you'll never hear anywhere else. An excellent game, and great for parties."

DEVELOPER: Freestyle Games
DISTRIBUTOR: Activision
PLAYERS: 1-2

9

MAGIC MOMENTS



GAME: V8 Supercars
Race Driver
CONSOLE: PS2
YEAR: 2002

THE MOMENT:

Conrod Straight is the fastest section of Mount Panorama. That makes it the coolest section of Mount Panorama. They eventually stuck a big kink at the end because it exceeded the FIA's length for an unbroken straight – but this just made it cooler. The Chase at the end of Conrod is fastest right hand bend in Australia, and the *fastest for touring cars in the world*.

V8 Supercars Race Driver was not our first trip to the mountain in the series; Bathurst appeared in the last instalment for PSOne, *TOCA World Touring Cars*. It did, however, mark the first time we could do it in a fully-licensed V8 Supercar. The experience was improved in each of the sequels, but the first time was quite special.

The finest moment, however? That had to be rounding The Elbow and blasting onto Conrod Straight.

You knew it was coming. You hit the highest point on the circuit and sped through McPhilly Park, the quick downhill left-hander. Then it was Skyline – a descending right-hand corner and the first of The Esses. Through The Dipper, then The Elbow, then it was a flat-out burn as the track straightened out and the world started going backwards.

It was a moment that had us grinning from ear to ear. The effect wore off after some time, but the anticipation of reaching that one point on the track where you give it the beans and don't lift off until you're doing 300km/h – at least for the first time – was huge. Speed thrills.



INFAMOUS

Constructor



CONSTRUCTOR

Hard hat not included

Ports of games from other platforms can be a blessing and a curse. Racing games across multiple consoles and PC were usually good, like *TOCA Touring Car* series. Strategy games were hit and miss. A hit was *Command & Conquer*. A miss was *Constructor*, though not without trying. Like many strategy titles, its Achilles' heel was the control scheme. Trying to condense a full keyboard and mouse onto a pad with 14 buttons and no thumbsticks (we're talking pre-DualShock days) was like trying to squeeze a fighter jet into a hatchback, or making a one-armed man battle Hendrix on the guitar. This is something that developers still struggle with 10-or-so years later.

In the world of *Constructor* you were

“Like many strategy titles, its Achilles' heel was the control scheme”

a cross between a foreman, landlord and mayor dishing out orders as a meta-being, manipulating the life of various stereotypes and dealing with rival towns encroaching on your turf. Burly 'level 1' tenants paid little rent as they lived in shacks, but their offspring could become workers once their parents died. Higher-level (read: snooty) tenants would only live in mansions, but would line your pockets by paying astonishing rent. Hippies would have parties, squatters and cockroaches would take over abandoned houses. Rival 'undesirables' would set fire to buildings.

We can get deep and say that the game reflected a broad, class-based system that underlies Western culture. Lower level (less worthwhile) homeowners were only 'good'

for hard, physical work. The more educated tenants, who would become something 'important' were specifically labelled at a higher level in-game, and had more money to spend. It was possible to build schools in a neighbourhood, or buy a home a PC to get children out of a level 1 rut, but the 'dumber' residents were needed to become workers. A town full of snobs would get nothing done.

Of course, this is just fiction. It was a fun game at the time, an ecology using funny caricatures instead of an invisible mob that made sprawling SimCity metropolises. It tried to do something different, focussing on micro management than an overall world. But it was a PC port and suffered from being on a CRT screen (remember those?) with a crappy

resolution. Tiny men running around on a low-res display meant you couldn't really see much, and zooming out to take care of a ruckus on the other side of town wasn't an option. Once your plot

of land or the screen got too full the whole game would s-l-o-o-w down and was plagued with a sloppy framerate. EA/Bullfrog had the scene sewn up with *Theme Park* and *Theme Hospital*, which not only had charm but were technologically adept.

Its sequel, *Street Wars*, stayed on the PC – likely thanks to the tepid response. We don't imagine there was any outcry at the time. If there was we don't recall it. ▶ Paul Taylor



INFO

CONSOLE: PLAYSTATION
GENRE: STRATEGY
DEVELOPER: SYSTEM 3
COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: UK
CURRENT APPROXIMATE PRICE: \$8.45 PSN



MEMORIES ARE MADE OF THIS

Constructor was one of the few games on PSone that had a third-party (unofficial) memory card bundled with it – roughly an extra \$30 worth of value with the full-priced game. It needed it, as the game took up 15 blocks of memory, which was the precise number of blocks on a PSone memory card. This saving was offset by the option of buying a PlayStation mouse to make things a little smoother. Those who bought the mouse could enjoy using it with roughly three other PSone games.

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